

T H E
PERFECT RELIGIOUS
A WORK DESIGNED
FOR THE ASSISTANCE
O F
THOSE WHO ASPIRE AFTER PERFECTION
IN A RELIGIOUS STATE.

A N D
EQUALLY USEFUL FOR ALL OTHERS
Who desire to advance in true Virtue
And Piety

*Written in French by R. F. MICHAEL
ANGEL MARIN, of the Order of
S. Francis of Paula or Minims.*

Translated into English by B. F. E. O. S. F.



D O W A Y,
Printed by J. F. WILLERVAL, Printer to the King.

M. D C C. L X I.

THE
PERFECT RELIGIOUS
A WORK DESIGNED
FOR THE ASSISTANCE
OF
THOSE WHO ATTEND WITH TENDENCY
IN A RELIGIOUS STATE



EQUALLY HELD
Who desire to be

42
1
7
33
Translated into

DO NOT
Lined by J. W. Newman, Esq. in 1842
and printed by J. W. Newman, Esq. in 1842



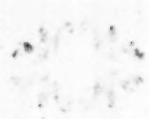
TO ALL
THE RELIGIOUS LADIES,
OF DIFFERENT ORDERS
IN THE SEVERAL
ENGLISH MONASTERIES,
WHO ARE TRULY DESIROUS
OF ACQUIRING THE PERFECTION
OF THEIR STATE

This Treatise Done Into English,
Is Most Humbly Inscribed,
BY THE TRANSLATOR B. F. E.





TO ALL
THE RELIGIOUS LADIES,
OF DIFFERENT ORDERS
IN THE SEVERAL
ENGLISH MONASTERIES,
WHO ARE TENDLY DESIROUS
OF ACQUAINTING THE PUBLIC
OF THEIR STATE
This Tracts Don't Miss
Is Most Humbly Dedicated,
By the Author J. H. L.





T H E
AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

***** N treatises of piety as well as
* I * in dogmatical ones , no one
***** ought to value himself in saying
things that are new. This would be
giving into error or illusion. The mo-
ral of JESUS-CHRIST , goes hand in
hand with faith : We believe what
always was believed , & we teach
what was always taught.

When we find in a pious book what
has been already said in many others,
it does not follow this book is useless.
By a necessary consequence of the
principle just established , we ought
only to say what has been always
said , as it is not permitted to teach
any other doctrine , but that which
has been taught in all ages.

Since we address this work to Nuns
& Religious ladies , they will find
therein , in a regular method , the

oeconomy of that pious behaviour, they ought to observe & keep in order to correspond to the excellency of their vocation, the manner of correcting their faults, the virtues they ought to endeavour to acquire, the use they ought & are to make of the means Religion puts into their hands for their sanctification, the happiness of those, who have zeal & courage to work efficaciously at it.

We have laid down all these things in short & precise maxims in order to contain in one small volume what can only be met with elsewhere by much reading. This methodical order will serve to help their memory, & to recall to mind what they had learnt by long lectures & which they may have easily forgot.

The subjects of piety having no other end but to touch the heart without seeking to flatter the curiosity of the mind, it would be needless to expect in this treatise, any ornaments of florid eloquence. We write with simplicity, & we present this work with the same simplicity we wrote it.

As this is an abridgment, we have not enter'd into a long detail in which

nothing may be wanting. You will here find the fundamental principles of Religious virtues, various means of practising them, & withsoever little attention, you may apply them to yourself according to your necessities.

We have stuck to the common & ordinary way of religious perfection, without entring into the extraordinary ones; which would have required a too long discussion, & be of use but to few persons. Those whom almighty God has raised to those elevated states, may in their doubts consult with experienced Directors, or have recourse to the books that treat of these sublime ways.

The method & order we have follow'd, is something like that of mystical divines. In the first part we treat of renouncing to the world & to one's self. In the second, of the exercises of piety & of the practice of virtue. And in the third, of an interior life & of the love of God.

To conclude : tho' this work is chiefly addressed to Religious persons; yet those, who in the world aspire at perfection, may equally find here where-with to instruct & help themselves, as well as to be edified.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

**FACULTAS
MINISTRI PROVINCIALIS.**

NE Anglicanae inclitae nationis animae devotae; praesertim Moniales, subjectae nostrae directioni careant opere maxime celebrato tanquam maxime proficuo ad perfectionem Religiosam adipiscendam, licentiam concedimus ut translatio Libri cujus titulus est: *La Parfaite Religieuse*, è gallico idiomate in Linguam Anglicanam à R. A. P. F. E. facta, ac à R. A. P. PACIFICO BAKER diligenter revisa & approbata, quantum ad nos pertinet, servatis servandis, praelo mandetur. Datum in residentia nostra Londinensi die 13. Aprilis 1761.

F. THOMAS HOLMES, Almae
Provinciae Angliae Fratrum Min.
Recoll. Min. Provincialis.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

A P P R O B A T I O.

Librum cui titulus: *The Perfect Religious*, è gallico idiomate à R. A. P. F. E. almae Provinciae Angliae FF. Min. S. Theol. Lect. Jubil. & Ex-Provinciali, accuratè & fideliter translatum diligenter perlegi, nihilquè in eo contra fidem Romano-Catholicam aut bonos mores inveni: è contra omnia in eo veram spirant perfectionem Religiosam, atque per viam certam & tutam ad amorem Dei conducunt; ideoquè omnibus, ac maxime Religiosis utriusquè sexus perutilem fore, ac praelo dignissimum censeo. Die 13 Aprilis an. Christi 1761.

F. PACIFICUS BAKER, Praedictae
Almae Provinciae Ex-Dif. & Guard.
Londin. Act.

THE



TO
THE READER.

*** I ***
Have little or nothing to
to say by way of Preface
and Introduction to the
following treatise. Who-
ever will take the pains to peruse
it, will find that Author perfectly
corresponds in his book to the title
he has given it; and that every one
by practising the maxims laid down
in it, may not only become a per-
fect Religious, but also be raised to
the highest degree of perfection.

My endeavour has been to stick
to the Author as close as I could,
& to render him into English as
litterally as possible, without losing
any of his spirit & unction. If some-
times I have been forced to deviate
from his expressions, hope never

to have done it from his sense and meaning; which I here present you with, whole & entire, without either adding or diminishing any thing; tho' I am very sensible there are some things contained in it, no ways applicable to any of our English Monasteries, as well as faults & abuses mentioned, not to be found in them; & indeed I scarce believe in any other. But the zeal of our pious Author moved him not only to correct by his salutary rules & instructions those faults & abuses, that had crept in, but also to fence against those that possibly might be introduced. Therefore it seemed best to give him as he is, & not to cut off or leave out any thing, since in reality all is valuable in him.

This appears from the Judgment of a person eminent for his skill & knowledge in treatises of this kind; & who having most carefully revised & perused it, sent me his opinion in the following words.

„ To give you frankly my opinion of the book, I think it

and
you
out
any
here
no
En-
ults
und
ieve
our
nly
s &
ses,
ence
t be
best
cut
since
m.
nent
ll &
nd;
re-
opi-
opi-
k it

most excellent, a Master piece
of the kind, & truly answering
it's title, the perfect Religious.
Can never be too much recom-
mended to Religious of all or-
ders & both sexes. The maxims
are true & solid, enforced with
proper life & spirit, & the most
moving energy. A true spiritual
unction appears in every Page,
& cannot I think be read by any,
even the most tepid Religious
without finding themselves effi-
caciously moved to aspire after,
and labour for the perfection of
their holy states. To so great
a recommendation & of so good a
judge, I can add nothing.

In the citations out of the Imi-
tation of CHRIST, I have faith-
fully copied, except in one or two
places, the English translation of
R. C. printed in 1756; as it is
more conformable to the letter of
the Author, than the french trans-
lation our Author made use of,
seems to be.

As the following translation was

undertook at the entreaties of a Religious lady, for whom I have the greatest affection & esteem, & to correspond to her pious desires of rendering this treatise serviceable to those, who, ignorant of the french language, consecrate themselves to the service of almighty God in a Religious state in our English Monasteries, the true nurseries of virtue & piety, I have dedicated it to them; & should I have the happiness by these my endeavours to contribute to their spiritual progress & advancement in Religious perfection, my end is answered & my pains fully recompensed.

I have nothing more to add, but to beg a share in their pious thoughts, & to submit this translation to the Judgment of our Holy Mother the Roman Catholich Church, & to that of my Superiors.

FAREWELL,

The Translator.



THE
PERFECT RELIGIOUS.

PART THE FIRST.

*Of Renouncing to the World
& to One's Self.*

ART. I.

 Religious Nun is a person who has solemnly renounced the world, to consecrate herself to JESUS CHRIST, & whom this divine Master has been pleased, by the grace of the vocation he inspired her with, to receive in the number of his sacred Spouses. Hence she may learn both the excellency of her state, & the extent of her obligations.

II.

A Religious in consequence of so great a favour ought to love & respect, above all things, her state. She ought often to be penetrated with sentiments of admiration, considering the grace she has received, and to excite in her heart, a lively sense of due grati-

A

tude to him, who, out of a pure effect of his mercy, chose her preferably to so many others.

III.

Those Religious who speak of their state with little esteem, & who seem to make little account of the holy practices therein observed, ought to consider that this contempt falls less upon their state, than upon JESUS-CHRIST himself. They shew by their conduct that their hearts are no less void of gratitude, than their minds are of Religion. "O sacred state of
,, Religious bondage ,, Crys out the devout
Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST,
(B. 3. c. 10. n. 6.) "which makes man equal
,, to Angels, pleasing to God, terrible to the
,, devils, & commendable to all the faithful

IV.

The love & respect, here required of Religious persons for their state, must extend to all that appertains to it, to the least customs of their Monastery, as well as to the most essential rules thereof; to the ceremonies, to the inclosure, to the habit & to the veil. Thus we read in the life of a great Saint, that she often used in raptures of holy joy to kiss the walls of the Monastery, which separated her from the world: and in the same pious sentiments Religious never ought to put off or put on their habit & veil without kissing them with devotion.

V.

Out of the same love for her state a Religious ought with great zeal to keep up the observance of it, both by her example & her sollicitude. She must be attentive not to diminish its vigour; She ought to make it a

RELIGIOUS.

3

of his duty, & as one may say a point of honour in the fight of God, to transmit regular discipline in all its purity to those who are to follow her.

VI.

How great glory would be render'd to JESUS CHRIST, & what Good to every one, did this holy emulation animate the heart of every Religious? Zeal of regular observance, good example thus kept up, would render Monasteries like so many mystical ladders, reaching from earth to heaven; where-on Religious ascending one after another by the different steps or degrees of virtues, those who begin to go up would have nothing to do but to follow those who went before them to arrive at the celestial kingdom.

VII.

You have renounced to the world by the state you have embraced, you must in consequence maintain this your renunciation, if you have a mind not to be unfaithful to your promises. You must keep a guard over yourself both as to your exterior & interior, so as not to think, or do any thing that may savour, or may shew you have any affection remaining for the world which you have abandoned.

VIII.

To give a more just idea of this Renunciation, we may here distinguish three sorts of worlds to which you ought to renounce. The first is the exterior world, from which you are separated by the material walls of your inclosure. The second is an interior little world, contained in the precincts of your Monastery. The third is a domestick world, which every one carries within his breast, composed of our

4 THE PERFECT

passions & defects. The more you disengage your self from these three worlds, the more you will advance in perfection & taste the sweets & advantages of your state.

IX.

Be not content to be separated from the world by the walls of your inclosure; but hinder, as much as you can, the exterior world from coming to trouble your solitude by its frequent visits, to interrupt the tranquillity of your retreat. If charity directs you to receive with politeness those who come to see you; your solemn renunciation to the world, requires of you never to do any thing to procure idle & unnecessary visits.

X.

It cant be too much recommended to Novices & those who are newly professed to shew to all seculars, from the very beginning, a distaste & aversion for such visits, & to put them on the footing of coming but seldom. They must shew a firmness in their resolution without any regard to the complaints & murmurs of others. Should they declare without difficulty that they dont love going to the ParLOUR without necessity, they may perhaps at first be upbraided with scrupulosity, & be exposed to suffer some severe reproaches & piquant raileries. But the world will soon cease to importune, & the esteem it will have for them will be as great as the contempt it has for a Religious, who shews a too visible fondness for company & secular conversations. „ If t ou cans't let men alone, „ says the Author of the Imit. of J. C. (B. 1. c. 21. n. 2.) „ They will let thee do what thou hast to do

RELIGIOUS.

5

XI.

What can be thought of a Religious, who runs with an eagerness & an air of dissipation to the Speak-house, when ever called; who expresses to secular people the extreme joy she receives in their visits; who complains & reproaches them with their long absence; who entertains them with compliments & superfluous talk; who asks a thousand questions, & is inquisitive to know all that passes in the Town and elsewhere; who feeds her mind with all the news she hears? Has a Religious of this character sincerely renounced the world? Has she the true Spirit of her vocation? How praise worthy would she be, did she shew nothing but a modest reservedness, an indifference for the things of this world, and a constant love for her retreat. Ought she to fear exposing herself to pass for impolite & unsociable? No. The regularity of her conduct wou'd render her most agreeable to God, & at the same time wou'd make her a most edifying example to the world.

XII.

A Religious ought never to appear in the Parlour without having first put herself under the protection of her divine Spouse, & of the most blessed Virgin. She ought to stay no longer than good breeding absolutely requires, and ought to quit it with as great pleasure & eagerness, as she had repugnancy to go to it. A faithful observance of these three points will hinder the Speak-house from being an obstacle to her perfection.

XIII.

A reasonable fear & a prudent diffidence of

A iij

6 THE PERFECT

one's self ought always to accompany a Religious to the Speak-house & serve her for a guard. She ought to carry herself there with seriousness & gravity, & her behaviour to be altogether Religious. She must refrain from breaking out into loud laughing, & curb the levity of the senses, & above all of her eyes, by observing a most exact modesty. She ought by her discourse & all her conduct to inspire into seculars a respect for the sanctity of her state, thereby to hinder the corruption of the age making any impression on her heart.

XIV.

Do not in the Parlour affect an air too free & easy, or any worldly ways. Do not with some, who have a mind to pass for great wits, pique yourself in giving sharp & ingenious repartees. Say nothing that can draw upon you the praises & applause of others, which have no other foundation than those qualities which are only pleasing to worldlings.

XV.

A Monastery whose Grates are seldom frequented, where the common reports & news of the world are not known, where people go only to receive salutary lessons from the pious discourses of the Religious; such a Monastery is a sweet odour to JESUS-CHRIST, & is capable of drawing down the most abundant blessings of heaven upon the town in which it is situated. It depends on each particular Religious so to conduct herself in regard to the Speak-house, as to render this elogy applicable to her Monastery.

XVI.

What vanity is more preposterous than

RELIGIOUS.

7

Religious that of a Religious, who in coming to the Grate takes a pride in her person & figure, & whose attention is taken up in inspiring it into others for those graces, which she ought rather to fear than praise. The same is to be said of her who dares not appear till she has first adjusted her habit & veil with an over great affectation. We call it a preposterous vanity, but it may be more justly qualified with the title of prophanation in a person who has made a divorce with the world to consecrate herself to JESUS-CHRIST crucified.

XVII.

A Religious when she goes from the Grate ought to endeavour to forget whatever she heard there idle or unprofitable. Would to God she could even forget she had received a visit there ! at least she is to impose on herself a law never to spread or divulge the worldly news she heard, supposing she could not do otherwise than harken to it.

XVIII.

A Religious ought not to think it sufficient to avoid unnecessary conversations with people of the world ; She must moreover endeavour to banish from her mind the very thoughts of the world, she has quitted. If having separated herself from it by her entrance into the Monastery, she takes a pleasure in thinking of it, & willingly feeds her imagination with it, we may with reason reproach her that in taking the sacred veil she only made an outward parade of Sacrifice. Might she not be compared to those fruits, which having a beautiful & fine outside, are worm-eaten & rotten at heart.

8 THE PERFECT XIX.

The Religious who , charged with the care of Pensioners , take a pride in dressing them according to the vain maxims of the world , & who never look upon them with greater pleasure then when they are thus finely adorn'd ; who, and which is still worse , praise & flatter them on their beauty, & thereby inspire them with sentiments of self love ; these Religious I say have not less the Spirit of the world than worldlings them selves , & commit at the same time three great evils. The first , is the prejudice they do to the young ladies whom they nourish & entertain in vanity , whereas they were only committed to their care to be brought up in a Christian education. The second is , they destroy the reputation of their Monastery in the judgment of all sensible & discreet persons , who from thence may think it rather a school of worldly vanity , than a proper asylum & sanctuary to preserve their childrens innocence. The third is , they hurt their own conscience & charge it , in the sight of God , with all the fatal consequences & misfortunes which an education so little conformable to the gospel is exposed & liable to.

XX.

A Religious may easily lose the Spirit of her vocation by the vanity she inspires into a young Pensioner put under her care , in taking a delight to dress her. Does she not immediately shew her heart relishes those vanities ? This relish , this love may it not augment in her in proportion to the pleasure she takes in viewing her young Pupil thus finely dress-

RELIGIOUS.

9

ed? Will not these reflections lead her still farther, & will She not think of the pleasure of appearing in the world with a handsome figure let off by the gaiety of drefs & ornaments? Is any thing more wanting to inspire her with a contempt & disgust for her inclosure & for her veil? Was God to reveal to us the first cause of the eternal loss of so many Religious, we should perhaps find it to be no other than the abuse we now speak of & condemn.

XXI.

But a Religious, who does not relish this Doctrine, may reply that all the young Ladies that are brought up in Monasteries are not to be Nuns. The greatest part will engage in the world, & by consequence they must be educated in such a manner as to be able to appear in it with advantage. But what does she understand by this? Is it that they must inspire them with a taste for those vanities which are so justly condemn'd even in ladies the most given to the world; for those vanities which are often the ruin of families, & which the devil makes so great use of for the loss of so many souls? Inspire the Pensioner committed to your care with sentiments of simplicity & modesty. Instill into her a great horror of sin. Breed her up in the exercise of all Christian virtues. How happy will it be for her, if when from under your care, she corresponds in the world to the excellent education you gave her in the Monastery? You will then present a treasure to the world, God will be glorified, you will deservedly gain honour, and she will make a family happy if she settles in a married state.

It does not look very edifying to see in the Parlours of Monasteries a dancing Master teaching the pensioners to dance, & the Mistress narrowly observing them thro' the grate & chiding when they do not follow & keep to the rules of art. If Parents will have their Children make a figure in Balls & Assemblies, let them make use of their own houses & not of Religious Monasteries, for them to learn. The mansions of the Spouses of JESUS-CHRIST are not for such prophane exercises.

XXIII.

A young Religious of an easy temper, joined to a solid piety, may have a great influence on the Pensioners. She may, by her good example, and edifying discourses win their hearts to good, draw them to virtue & even to Religion. But if a young Religious, who has not a solid virtue, seeks after the company of the Pensioners, and enters into a strict friendship with them, above all with the great & high Pensioners, she will not only grow remiss, but, how little a while soever this friendship lasts, it will be attended with bad consequences: and if we were to inquire into the cause of the irregularity & many disorders which are apparent in certain Monasteries, we should soon find them to spring from the familiarities which the young Religious have with the great Pensioners.

XXIV.

Why do you, who have renounced to the world by your profession, seem to set so great a value on its grandeur, on its riches, on its

RELIGIOUS.

11

honours ? Why do you shew so great an esteem for its vanities ? Why do you speak with so much complacency of your birth, of your parents, of your alliances ? If you so much esteem these pretended advantages, why did you renounce to them ? But since you have renounced to them, you ought not to talk of them with so great esteem ; & so far from taking pride in them, you ought entirely to forget them. Many great Queens & Princesses have abandoned their Scepters, their Crowns, their rich Palaces, the honours of Sovereignty, to engage themselves in the state you have embraced ; and in that state never distinguished themselves from the rest but by their more profound and greater humility.

XXV.

The renouncing to the Spirit & Maxims of the world is the first step a Religious ought to take to arrive at an interior life. It will be of use to make recollection in prayer & Meditation easy to her, by estranging her from all those distractions which are inseparable from a commerce with the world. It will free her from the pain which proceeds from trouble, & from the aridity & dryness of heart, ordinary fruits of this infectious communication. And in a word, less taken up with the world, she will have more leisure to attend to her own perfection.

XXVI.

Thus disengaged from the exterior world, a Religious ought to arm herself against what we may call the interior world, that slides in & maintains itself but too much in certain Monasteries. This world is a dissipation of

mind , and neglect of regular observance which proceeds from the union of many imperfect Religious , who being each one in particular guilty of many defects , keep & strengthen themselves in them by an unhappy union & mutual bad example , which is not only a great obstacle to their change and reformation , but also the fatal cause of the eternal ruin of many.

XXVII.

A Religious possessed with the Spirit of this exterior world is quite dissipated , and amuses herself with idle discourses , frivolous occupations , immoderate laughings , and almost a continual loss of time. Her chief care is to meddle with what belongs to others without any other reason than to satisfy her curiosity & fancy. She informs herself of every thing that passes in the Monastery & spreads it about among the Sisters with the same levity of mind and eagerness with which she learns it. She gives herself the liberty without pain or scruple to speak her mind & sentiments upon every thing & in all occasions , whatever bad consequence her indiscretion & imprudence may have. She decides on the conduct of her Sisters & criticizes it according to her caprice, or as she is affected in their regard. She murmurs continually & without ceasing against those who are in office , & without even the least probability , fathers upon them intentions neither upright nor just. She oftentimes makes false reports capable of extinguishing charity among the Sisters , & of kindling the fire of discord. She always sides with the abettors of relaxation against those who

RELIGIOUS.

13

who have regular observance at heart. She follows in all things the voice of nature & her passions ; but seldom that of grace , so that dissipation , infidelity & lukewarmness make up her principal character.

XXVIII.

Further a Religious, who follows this interior world , does not content herself with making little , or no account of the rules , & with transgressing them with impunity ; but she excites others to do the same , and despises them if they remain steadfast & faithful to them. She has neither relish , nor desire of the things of God , nor any design to work at , or to acquire religious perfection. On the contrary , she reckons it a point of honour not to have any devotion , & would look upon it almost as an injury , was she to be told she was devout. She ridicules those who are pious , & carries her malice so far , as to endeavour to divert & dissuade those from it , who would be so ; which to many is a just subject of great scandal. She makes herself friends at the expence of common charity , & occasions by this great disorder in the Monastery. She knows neither humility , nor poverty , nor obedience , nor mortification , nor any other religious virtue. Her mind is the grand theatre of dissipation. Her heart is entirely given up to its passions & worldly affections. Her senses are open to all the objects that occur. Her soul is like the field mentioned in scripture (Prov. c. 24. v. 30.) filled with nettles , & thorns , & whose walls being broken down had no defence. What we call the interior world of some Monasteries is com-

14 THE PERFECT

posed of such subjects as these, more or less imperfect. But what ought not those Religious, who know themselves by these marks, to fear & apprehend for their souls.

XXIX.

A Religious, who has true Christian charity will excuse those of her Sisters, whom she sees carried away with the torrent of this world; & unless, by the obligation of her office, she has a right to correct them, or by the ascendance she may have over them, she may presume to be able to bring them back to their duty, & more regular conduct, she must content herself to beg of almighty God, that he would change their hearts. She must abstain in their regard from all sentiments of indignation, & never give herself up to a bitter zeal, more proper to irritate, than cure the evil. For the rest, as to herself, she ought to be continually on her guard never to join in their dissipation, or let herself be led away by their bad example.

XXX.

If you have a mind to make a progress in a spiritual life, build yourself, as the scripture says, [Job. 3. v. 14.] a solitude in the retirement of your cloister, where recollected in a prudent retreat, & disengaged from every thing, that does not lead to your perfection, you may live alone with God alone. For this, it is no ways necessary you should separate yourself from the company of the other Sisters, nor that you should study to avoid them; but it will be sufficient, that you converse with them no more, than the regular duties, common charity, & good breeding demand and oblige you to.

RELIGIOUS.
XXXI.

15

As much as is in your power, so that charity may not be hurt, you ought to endeavour to be content without any creatures, to forget them, and be forgot by them. You must place all your consolation in God, & in being known by him alone. In short, you must converse with creatures only because it is the will of God, and never merely to satisfy the inclination we all naturally have of knowing & of being known.

XXXII.

It is not enough to disengage your heart from all affection to creatures, you ought moreover to rejoice that no one attaches herself to you, otherwise your disengagement would only be an illusion, or at least very imperfect, & have nothing but an outward appearance of virtue. What a new sort of disengagement unknown to all the Saints & to all the Masters of a spiritual life, would not that in reality be, by which you would think to have advanced a great deal, in not being tied to any one, when, at the same time, self love makes you desire, that others should be tied to you? You would be truly commendable & praise worthy, did you consecrate to God alone all the affections of your heart; but not when you render yourself guilty of theft, by endeavouring to gain the affections of others, whose hearts are no less entirely his than your own.

XXXIII.

Particular friendships can scarce ever subsist between religious persons without prejudice to common charity, & without com-

mitting many faults. A Religious over attached to another has her mind almost always taken up with her, because she has always the object present, & nothing to divert her thoughts from it. The remembrance of her friend accompanies her every where, in the choir, as well as in recreation. And how can a Religious, whose constant thoughts are fixed upon a creature, & whose inclination carries her towards her, ever recollect herself, & elevate her mind to God?

XXXIV.

This is not the only inconvenience that attends these friendships. A Religious, who is tied to them, becomes extremely sensible to whatever concerns her friend, & makes it a continual subject of her anxiety; she feels every thing that touches her. Has her friend had any dispute with another: has she received any contradiction; immediately the person takes it to heart, & often with greater warmth, than her friend does herself. She espouses her quarrels & her aversions; she undertakes her justification against all the Sisters, & even against the Superior herself. She is angry, & breaks out into murmurs; she scolds, & disturbs a whole house; nor is there any excess which her friendship does not prompt her to commit.

XXXV.

There is another inconvenience of private friendships not less to be feared; if such a Religious perceives her friend omits to place in her her usual confidence, or that she shuns to be alone with her, or looks upon her with an air of indifference, or shews an

marks of affection for another Sister : what trouble , what agitation does she not then feel growing up within her breast ? What passion, what reproaches is she not ready to break out into ? Or if she can contain herself , the interior chagrin that gnaws & devours her , is enough to throw her into a serious fit of sickness. And so the gall , she experiences in her friendship, far outweighs those vain sweets & consolations she flattered herself to find.

XXXVI.

The regular discipline of a Monastery may be look'd upon as on the brink of its ruin , when this abuse of particular friendships becomes too frequent , or in a manner general. Common union , which can't be firm and lasting but by Christian charity , subsists no longer ; & in its place , there is only an apparent union supported by decency , worldly politeness or politicks : props too weak to keep up a necessary good harmony , & without an exact discipline in a Monastery. In consequence of this maxim , every Religious , that contracts a strict friendship with another to the prejudice of common charity , ought to know that thereby she strikes no less at regular observance , than at charity ; & should the other Sisters follow her example , they would occasion the fall & ruin of a house , whose honour each one ought to maintain before God & man , at the peril & risk of their lives.

XXXVII.

Let us compare a Monastery divided by particular friendships with one where common charity is kept up in all its rights , & see

18 THE PERFECT

how opposite they are, & how great a contrast there is between them. In the first, suspicions, mistrusts, jealousies, murmurs, quarrels, provocations are daily seen. The spirit of JESUS-CHRIST is banished thence, & reigns there no more; but in its place, passions & self love domineer, & bear the sway; because all these friendships are formed & cemented by a natural affection, which is nothing but a seeking to please themselves in the vain satisfaction they find in contracting such friendships. But in those Monasteries where the charity & love of JESUS-CHRIST unites the hearts, all love one another alike, they bear with each other, & prevent, help, & serve each other cordially. Murmurings, disputes, grudges, parties, divisions are totally banished. If by chance charity is disturbed, it is but slightly & without noise, or for a very little while; because they all unanimously endeavour to stifle the least spark of discord. Peace reigns in these Monasteries to the perfect comfort & consolation of all the Religious. This is that charming peace, which neither the world, nor any vain affection to creatures can ever afford. This is that peace of JESUS-CHRIST, which, as the Apostle says, (Phil. c. 4. v. 7.) surpasses all understanding.

XXXVIII.

With what spiritual blessings does not this common charity, opposed to particular friendships, enrich a Monastery? What powerful motives to advance in piety does it not procure to the Religious? By it they love one another in God & for God, & he recom-

penſes this pure & holy amity with an overflow of heavenly graces. It is thro' the means of this celeftial dew, that virtues grow up among theſe Religious, & bring forth their fruit with edification. The more they are united, the more are they, after God, a mutual conſolation to each other. They are thereby far from ſeeking any comfort abroad in uſeleſs & vain converſations with people of the world. They have no neceſſity to ſeek to make themſelves amends at the Grate for any uneaſineſſes they may apprehend to ſuffer in the interior of the Monastery, ſince they enjoy a profound peace & a marvelous content with their Siſters. It is by means of this charity, they animate, encourage, & ſtrengthen themſelves in piety, either by the good example they mutually give each other, or by the edifying diſcourſes they have together, or becauſe they all concur to the ſanctification of their Siſters. And thus inſpired with a charity for JESUS-CHRIST, & with a zeal for the glory of this great Maſter, they are all fervent, & all rejoice at their mutual progreſs in perfection.

XXXIX.

Let then the Religious be convinced of the great obligation they have of preſerving this common charity; let them ſee & conſider the prejudice, that particular friendships bring to a Monastery in general, & to their own ſanctification in particular; let them moreover weigh & reflect on the pains & anxieties, with which theſe frivolous friendships are attended; & let them be perſuaded that to whatever object out of God they attach themſelves, they

will find nothing but vanity & affliction of spirit. (Eccl. c. i. v. 14.)

XL.

By what we have said, we do not pretend, that a Religious is forbid to have an affection for another, whose familiarity & conversation may be advantageous to her soul; but then it must always be with a disengagement, that leaves the heart free, & at liberty to go to God. This friendship must be exempt from the anxious trouble & jealous sensibility, which are the Characteristicks of the foolish passions of the world; it must not hinder the exact observance of regular duties, nor ever make her transgress the Rule, nor espouse the passions & preventions of her friend. This friendship in short must be built on an esteem that flows from piety, & not upon a sympathy, or other qualities purely natural; so far from weakning, it must promote the practice of virtue, & never disclose, or shew itself in such a manner, as the other Sisters may suffer by it.

XLI.

The Author of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST gives an excellent rule to render such a friendship holy & beneficial, when he says, it must be grounded in JESUS-CHRIST. Harken to the words, with which this Divine Master addresses himself to the devout soul. [B. 3. c. 42. n. 1.] Son " In me the love of thy friend must stand: & for me is he to be loved, whoever he be, who appears to thee good, & is very dear to thee in this life: without me no friendship is of any strength, nor will be durable; nor is that

RELIGIOUS. 21

love true & pure of which I am not the author. Thou oughtst to be so far mortified to such affections of persons beloved, as to wish (for as much as appertains to thee) to be without any company of man. „

XLII.

What has been said of the interior world, which reigns in some Monasteries, & of the particular friendships, which are so dangerous, is scarce, God be thank'd, to be found in those religious houses, where regular observance is duly kept up; & it is by banishing these two great enemies of regularity, that they have constantly maintained themselves in religious discipline. It is therefore just to make a difference between Monasteries. In some the observance is exact, & maintained in its full vigour. In others only in part, & that more or less, as the number of the fervent Religious prevails over that of the relaxed. And finally in others regularity is so much disfigured, that it is no more regularity, but disorder. No Rule observed, no religious exercise duly performed, no subordination. The Parlours always open, always beset, & always full. Intrigues laid & hatch'd, a spirit of the world no less surprising than scandalous. The Libertins themselves speak of them with contempt, & make them the subject of their malicious Lampoons; and good men can only think of them with tears & grief.

XLIII.

Monasteries disorder'd to such an excess are very rare; but there are some to be found whose disorder, tho' in a much less degree, is still visible enough to furnish matter of cri-

ticism. The scandal is often occasion'd by a person or two, who make themselves remarkable; whilst the other Religious, exact enough to deserve due praises, suffer by the prejudices which the publick, always unjust & precipitate in its judgment, entertains of them on account of the bad conduct of some particulars. There are many more Monasteries, in which regular discipline is kept up by the number of good Religious, who are faithful observers of it. When these prevail over the others, tho' there may be some weaknesses seen in those who are remiss & negligent, there is still reason to bless God, that he is faithfully served by the greater number, in which are many very devout & interior souls. And there are some Monasteries where God is served so perfectly, that there are many of a distinguished & eminent piety to be found; where primitive observance is preserved in the same purity as at the beginning of their foundation; where all the Religious zealously labour to maintain it, & are like an Army ranged in battle, which hell is afraid of, & which no relaxation can penetrate, or break through.

XLIV.

When one considers these last Monasteries, where God is served with so great fervour & perfection, one feels a secret consolation in JESUS-CHRIST; one is tempted to cry out in the words of the Scripture, (numb. 24. v. 5.) as S. Athanasius did (vit. S. Antonii c. 14.) speaking of the holy anchorets of his time. *How beautiful are thy Tabernacles ô Jacob, & thy Tents ô Israel! As woody valleys, as watered*

gardens near the rivers, as Tabernacles which the Lord has pitch'd, as Cedars by the water side. seeing these holy Monasteries one can't do otherwise, than render thanks to the Saviour of the world for his preserving such fervour in these sacred Spouses, and to beg that he would vouchsafe to keep & strengthen them more and more in it; that he would banish far from them all innovations & novelties, by which the vigour of regular discipline may be in any ways impaired & lessened. Those who are in such holy mansions are to be call'd a thousand times happy; the ancients who give good example to the young; the young who copy after & faithfully tread in the steps of the ancients; they who have the happiness to enter with a sincere will & disposition to imitate the one & the other, & to perpetuate this fidelity in keeping up to the rules, even to the minutest Customs. The Towns, in which such Monasteries are situated, ought without ceasing to congratulate with themselves on their possessing so precious a treasure.

XLV.

The receiving persons of a doubtful vocation, & not put to the tryal, is one of the principal causes of relaxation and remissness in the regular discipline of Monasteries. A young person moved by resentment or disappointment, or only on account of some family reason, presents her self. They receive her without much inquiry or examination, & led, either by inclination, friendship, or interest, they conduct her to the Noviciat. She enters with all her imperfections & vices, & far from forsaking & mending them, she con-

tinues in & nourishes them. Her conversation soon becomes infectious to the young Novices, whose tender hearts are susceptible of every impression. The evil spreads insensibly, & her profession only augments it by a greater liberty allowed to the young Professed. It grows worse & worse in time; & at length the ancient ones, who were regularly dying & falling off one after another, are succeeded by loose, remiss, & disorderly ones who finding themselves the greater number in the Community, give the law, & change the face of the whole Monastery.

XLVI.

O how much it behoves all religious houses to make a good choice! Why so eager to receive Postulants, often without discretion & distinction, or out of motives purely human? A good vocation, a good character, a sincere desire of virtue, a pious looking for all regular observances, is what ought to determine you in the reception of young Ladies, who present themselves; and not an illustrious name, a considerable fortune, or the desire of filling your Monastery. Here may be applied what the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST says. (B. 3. C. 31. N. 5.

„ We diligently ask whether a person be rich
 „ beautiful, ingenious, a good singer; ...
 „ But how poor she is in spirit, how patient
 „ & meek, how devout & internal, is what
 „ few speak of. Nature looks upon the outward
 „ things of a man; but grace turns her face
 „ to the interior. Nature is often deceived
 „ but grace hath her trust in God, that she
 „ may not be deceived. „

A too often frequenting the Parlours is another cause of this relaxation. We have already said something on this head; but as the danger is great, it can't be too often repeated that the Grates are the weak sides of Monasteries, against which the devil, like those who besiege a town, raises his batteries. No one ought to flatter herself on this head. Visits of strangers, when frequent, serve only to dissipate the Religious, to fill their minds with the spirit of the world, to take them off from their duties. Even tho' they who come to see them are persons of piety, & under pretence of entertaining them & talking of pious things. The devil is full of cunning & deceit, he often hides himself under the cloak of virtue to seduce us more effectually. He transforms himself, according to the common saying, into an Angel of light, & his artifices in these occasions are so seducing & alluring, that I boldly affirm there are some occasions in which there's less to be fear'd for a Religious conversing with a military Person, than with frequently doing it with another, whose imposing and pious air hinders her from seeing on her guard.

XLVIII.

The Religious and great Pensioners being together, may likewise occasion a great deal of disorder in a Monastery; & especially when they are numerous & imbued with the spirit of the world. Ah! how hard is it for the poison, which infects them, not to communicate it self to the Religious who frequent them; especially to the young, with whom

they frequently are, whose company even they seek, as theirs is also sought after by them. How many secret conversations! & in the conversations, how many wordly & even pernicious discourses! What a means of seduction for the young Religious, among whom there perhaps may be some who had not a true vocation! What a means, I say, of seduction for them to be thus attach'd to these great Perfectioners, who design themselves for the world who are bent upon nothing but the vanities of the world; who talk of nothing but the pleasures & amusements of the world. These sentiments set forth & display'd in the conversations, easily pass from their own heads into that of the Religious, who are soon taken with them, who begin to be weary of their state, & look upon it as a heavy yoke that incommodes them, who carry it with uneasiness, & endeavour to shake it off in all they can, & who in a word become thereby entirely disorder'd & irregular.

XLIX.

The means to prevent & hinder these inconveniences would be, not to receive or take into the Monastery any grown up girls, especially those who have had a taste of the world; but only very young ones, who might be train'd up from their infancy & preserved in innocence. That they should be in a separate apartment, where they have no commerce, nor any thing in common with the Religious. That chosen Mistresses should be appointed; capable by their gravity, by their virtue & by their talents, to make themselves be feared, respected & loved at the same

Which would greatly conduce to give them an excellent education & keep them to their duty, & within bounds. But if without choice & distinction grown up Ladies are admitted; if they have the liberty to run about the Convent, & contract familiarity with the young Religious, if instead of assigning them Mistresses, every cell or chamber becomes a school; or if Mistresses be appointed without talents, capricious, whimsical, more fit to make themselves hated, & to excite the contempt of the Pensioners, than to gain their esteem & affection; or if these Mistresses being qualified, are not left at liberty in the performance of their office, but are thwarted & cross'd by the censorious Criticisms of particular Religious to whom these Ladies are recommended by their parents; in these diversities, the education of Pensioners, so advantageous to Religion & the state, would become a snare for the Religious, & might perhaps occasion so great a disorder, that it would be better to be in some publick place, than in such Monasteries.

L.

It is a grievous crime to bring in & spread such books in a Monastery, whether they are against faith, or whether only capable to corrupt the purity of our manners. Ah! what a terrible account will not they, who dare attempt such a crying outrage, have to render to JESUS - CHRIST, for the dangerous snares they lay to entrap his sacred Spoules! And what but a diabolical one, can push them to this. How can there be found people in the world so cruel, who, without any regard, or

any compassion for those Ladies, who have renounced all worldly consolations, the better to secure their salvation, who carry their malice so far, as to endeavour to render the sacrifice fruitless, to make them lose all the merit of the austerities & mortifications of their state, & to damn them eternally? Virgins, chaste Spouses of JESUS - CHRIST, conjure you, in the name of this Spouse of your souls, to be extremely upon your guard against them; reject with horror the mortal poison which your murderers dare present you in golden covers. Never permit your curiosity to lead you so far as ever to open those books. Make choice of those only which can instruct you in your duty, teach you the practice of it, and encourage you to be faithful in it. If you read any others, you open the door to your enemy, & you have no one to complain of but yourself for the ravage he will make in your soul.

II.

One of the most pernicious abuses that can be introduced into a Monastery, is that of playing at cards. The necessity for it to create & divert the mind can not be alledged for an excuse; there are an infinite number of other ways to do it more innocently. When it becomes a custom, it degenerates into a passion; they spend the nights as well as the days at it. They meet & assemble together in secret. They lose their money & make others do the same; they dispute & often quarrel. From play they run hastily to the office, where they recite without respect or attention, with a mind taken up with the gain or

they had; & from the Choir they run again
 play. Thus with gaming at cards there is
 no more silence kept, no Rule observed, no
 more poverty, no more obedience, no duty
 well comply'd with, no exercise of Religion
 perform'd as it ought, and when once this
 playing is become common in a Monastery,
 these evils become so likewise, & ruin it en-
 tirely. But what a scandal would it not be if
 the Superiours themselves, instead of oppo-
 sing & hindring it, as they are obliged in
 conscience to do, should authorize it by their
 presence & example!

LII.

A remark that has been often made, deser-
 ves to be mention'd here. It is, that there is
 no Monastery, howsoever loose or remiss, but
 that there is some one Religious in it, who is
 attentive & diligent in the discharge of her
 duty, zealous for the observance of her Rule,
 & given to prayer. It seems as if almighty
 God, in the midst of so much dissolution, had
 a mind, in her, to keep to himself one
 faithful Spouse, to make him amends by her
 zeal & fervour, for the infidelity of the others;
 & to reproach them, by an example always
 before their eyes, with their tepidity & re-
 luctance. It may be moreover said that he
 reserves these faithful souls, to confront them
 with the others at the day of Judgment, to
 renew them before the whole universe, that it
 was in their power to have sanctified them-
 selves, as those had done; that it is their own
 fault they have lost themselves, since having
 the same Rule to observe, the same means
 at their disposal, instead of imitating them,

they chose to follow the torrent of their passions, thereby rendering useless to themselves all those means of salvation. And what is still more extraordinary, have perhaps even persecuted those, whose virtue tacitly condemned their licentiousness, & thereby furnished them with an ample occasion of practising patience & of acquiring a rich treasure of merit.

LIII.

Woe be to those Religious, who, having such good examples before their eyes, instead of profiting by them, declare a secret war against them; who can not bear in others the virtue they ought to practise themselves, but do not do it; who declare themselves against that piety which condemns them; who abuse & revile JESUS-CHRIST in the person of his faithful servants; who in concert with the devil, endeavour to destroy that holiness which dazzles them, & who, in a word, empoisoned by jealousy or malice, would remove from their sight an object that is troublesome & insupportable to them, because it condemns their irregular conduct. I am willing to think this is more an ideal picture & description than a real one; for who can really believe that so much malice & depravation can be found in a Religious house? But if the evil should have risen to such a pitch, which we do not credit, may those who are guilty open their eyes, & see the hideous monster.

LIV.

If remissness & looseness of conduct come to such a degree in a Monastery, that virtue is despised & meets with oppositio

contradiction from the Religious, we may safely conclude irregularity is come to its height. What means to remedy it? Ah! how much time & how great care is necessary to effect it? But if piety is still esteemed & respected, tho' not practised by many, it is far from being so difficult to make regular observance flourish again. O you, who still have an esteem for the virtue you see practised by your Sisters; who look upon them as happy in being so faithful as they are; you who sometimes own you envy their state & would vain be like them; what then can hinder you from imitating them? Have they any stricter obligations than you? Have you not the same means to sanctify yourselves, as they? Are you not in the same Monastery, have you not the same Rule, the same exercises to practise, & in the same company? If there be any obstacles for you, are there not the same for them? You cannot then help having a value for virtue, and in reality to refuse it & in your esteem, you must stifle all sentiments of wealth & Religion, but I suppose your conscience is not yet hardened to such a degree. Let you stop at your empty applauses, & whilst you justly place these Religious with the wise Virgins, you remain (an incomprehensible paradox) you remain, I say, with the foolish ones, & had rather partake of their unhappy lot, than strive to overcome your foolishness & renounce to your disorders.

LV.

Riches & great poverty may be very prejudicial to Monasteries. Riches, because they are easily abused; because they puff up the heart

& inspire worldly sentiments ; because they procure the conveniences of life in too great abundance ; thereby are a great obstacle to humility & mortification. But it must be owned that a great poverty is yet more hurtful , that the spirituality of a Religious house is seldom kept up, when the temporalities are ruined.

LVI.

What we have said visibly appears by the difference there is between a Monastery that is easy, & one that is greatly in debt. In the first, the community being in a condition able to supply the Religious with what is necessary, there is no preference, no singularity, all are provided alike & after the same manner, both for their nourishment & for the furniture of their chambers, for their cloaths for their linnen &c. which makes an entire uniformity, so necessary for regular observance & common charity. Besides they are treated according to their necessities in health & sickness, & are freed from having recourse to their parents & relations & from being chargeable to them. Moreover, they live in a greater dependency on charity, & on the vigilance of Superiours, who are charged with the care of their temporals as well as spirituals; which greatly contributes to preserve subordination & keep up a good harmony between the inferiours & those who are in office. They are more exact in the practice of poverty, either because they have no temporal thing to desire, or because the Monastery furnishing every thing that is necessary, that according to the prescript of the Rule it is not permitted them to have any thing

superfluous, nor to heap up & take any precautions for future necessities, to which they are not exposed. In a word they have no other sollicitude than to labour for their sanctification, & to acquit themselves of the business entrusted to them; all other cares being reserved to the Superiour & her officers. It is not so when the Monasteries are so poor, as to be scarce able to find wherewith to nourish their Religious, & that even with the greatest frugality. The Religious being then obliged to seek elsewhere the other necessities of life, either become importune to their relations by their daily demands; or compell'd to work, the profit of which goes to supply them with what they have not from the community, they sometimes ruin their health; they are forced to treat with seculars to sell their work; their thoughts are all taken up with their temporal wants, & to prevent them they often neglect their particular exercises of piety, & on many occasions, dispense with those of the Rule. In short, a person who has quitted the world & enter'd into a Monastery with no other view than to attend to her sanctification, finds herself forced to have almost as much sollicitude as a mistress of a family. One may almost say she is no Religious, but that she is a merchant, an embroiderer, a seamstress, or a mantuamaker by trade.

LVII.

Our intention in what we have said, is not to accuse all Monasteries of disorders & relaxation, that have not a sufficiency to furnish the Religious with their necessities; this would be condemning, against the rules of charity &

even of Justice, half of those which are established. But when the poverty is so great, that the particulars are obliged to work for seculars, to procure themselves the necessities of life, we cannot dissemble but that it is to them an occasion of very great anxiety, and that such anxiety & sollicitude has great inconveniences, & may become an obstacle to their perfection, if they are not upon their guard. To set therefore every thing right, we say to those, who are furnished by the community with all they want, that being freed from all temporal cares & concerns, they would be extremely culpable, did they not turn all their thoughts to the spiritual advancement of their souls. We say to those who have pensions to supply themselves with what is wanting from the Monastery, to take care not to abuse them, in appropriating them to themselves, as if the property thereof belonged to them, but always to dispose of & use them with leave & a dependance on a Superiour's will, & according to the rules of that poverty they have vow'd & profess'd. Those, who, having no pension, & finding themselves in a Monastery indebted & ruined, are obliged to work in particular, to procure what is necessary for themselves; we tell them to bear, with submission & in a spirit of penance, the rigour of their poverty; to work, as heretofore the ancient Anchorets & Hermits did, with recollection & in the presence of God, never to do any work to flatter the vanity of worldly Ladies; never to appropriate to themselves the product of their work, & to employ it only in what is necessary, & that always with

ve, as they ought; to take care not to over-
 charge themselves with work, nor to heap up
 accumulate money, which can't be accor-
 ing to the spirit of poverty & shews an im-
 moderate desire of the goods of the world,
 most unworthy of a Religious. But to work
 ly to procure what the convent is not able
 furnish; in a word, to acquit themselves
 actually of their exercises of devotion, as
 much as is in their power, so that their ma-
 al labour does not extinguish in them the
 rit of prayer & of recollection.

LVIII.

If in the Monasteries, which are extremely
 or, those Religious who have pensions, &
 ven very considerable ones, were so disen-
 ged, & had generosity enough to sacrifice
 their pensions to the profit of the house, & at
 the same time took a resolution to work in
 common with those who have none, what
 merit would they not have in the sight of God!
 is not to be questioned but these pensions,
 the produce of the work of all the Sisters,
 ned to the small revenues of the convent,
 could put it in a condition to be able to fur-
 nish sufficiently, perhaps even abundantly,
 that is necessary to particulars. The work
 itself would be less painful, & less dissipating,
 regular discipline would be better observed.
 or it is not the work, much less work in
 common, that does a prejudice to the Reli-
 gious; it is working in particular, & the
 necessity of providing themselves with what
 they stand in need of. We are sensible how
 hard & difficult it will be to make this ad-
 vice pleasing & agreeable to those Religious

who have pensions ; but if they have the glory of God , & their own perfection at heart ; let them consider the good they might do by the small sacrifice , both to the community in general , by strengthening its regularity , & to their Sisters in particular , by easing them of their toilsome labours , & freeing them from a very great sollicitude , & to their own souls by the merit they would acquire in the sight of God for their zeal , their disengagement from their charity.

LIX.

Let us suppose , in a Monastery very much disorder'd , a Religious entirely dissipated , who moreover is in a strict friendship with several others as much disordered as herself , who given up altogether to her passions , remains in a bad state of conscience ; a Religious who has no other mark of her profession , than the habit & veil she wears ; who is as great a worldling in her cloister , as the most secular women are without. Would God this supposition was more chimerical than real , but it is sufficient to our present purpose it is not an impossible one. This Religious then has a desire to return to God : which way must she go about it ? If we tell her she will have scarce any thing to do , it is a difficulty to overcome , that all will be made easy to her ; we should deceive her , & she will be sensible of your deceit. Let us then speak plainly & tell her without disguise , yet you will meet great obstacles , & it will cost you a great deal to remove & conquer these obstacles from without , if you have too much frequented the Parlours , & have contracted

y friendships & made any acquaintances
 ere hurtful to your soul : obstacles from
 thin , from the companions of your disor-
 rs , who will not fail to load you with re-
 oaches , if you shew a mind to quit them ,
 will turn you into ridicule , which perhaps
 ay prove too sensible to nature : obstacles
 yourself from the vices you must root out ,
 from the passions you must resist & war
 ainst. Obstacles from the devil , who will
 agnify the difficulties to your imagination ,
 ho will endeavour to persuade you your un-
 rtaking is above your strength ; that you will
 ever be able to use a necessary violence to
 urself ; that it will be tedious & irksome
 live in retreat , to be assiduous in prayer ,
 mortify yourself ; that you run a risk to be
 on disgusted & disheartened ; that it will turn
 t to your shame & confusion to have begun
 great an undertaking without being able
 go through. These are the ennemys who
 ll oppose themselves to your pious design.
 ou must expect it , & they will give you a
 eat deal of trouble & labour. But will you
 rmit yourself to be so far cast down by
 em as to lose courage ? Will you resist our
 ord , who invites & presses you to return to
 m ? Will you continue to live on as you
 ve done , & will you renounce to heaven ,
 & lose your soul for an eternity , to exempt
 urself from a small labour for a time ?

LX.

Raise yourself up above all these difficulties
 th generosity , with zeal , & with courage ;
 however great & formidable they may
 pear to nature , yet fight manfully for God

D

& for yourself; declare yourself boldly, without betraying any faint-heartedness; enter on a retreat to begin your reformation in which, under the care of a prudent Director wholly taken up with the state of your conscience, & with the means to heal it, you may make the proper dispositions, & resolve to remove from you all the occasions of sin without excepting any one; and to seriously begin the practice of religious virtues, & constantly to persevere therein; repair by good confession all the defects you have reason to presume yourself guilty of in your precedent ones; give yourself up to God without reserve, abandoning yourself entirely to whatsoever he requires of you. Be as a piece of soft wax in the hands of your Director, never make use of your own will, but to submit it to his in all that regards your soul. Give him full liberty to cut off, to reform, & redress in you whatever he finds contrary to the designs of God. Have no human respect, no worldly consideration in what concerns your conversion; be deaf to whatever may be said to you to divert you from it, & harken only to the voice of your duty. Oppose meanness, patience, silence, without gall, without vivacity, without any bitter zeal, to all the ridiculous & ill natured stories they may say of you. Keep yourself retired & recollected in God, & lay at his sacred feet all your pains with confidence & humility, placing in him all your hope, & drawing from him all your strength. Hope always that he will sustain & uphold you, & never give yourself over to any thoughts of diffidence. In short app

yourself faithfully to your exercises of piety, and the observance of your rules. If you endeavour to perform these things as you ought, you will find true peace in your soul; you will experience the difference there is betwixt serving God, & following your passions, & you will never cease to return thanks to the divine goodness, which has so mercifully delivered you from the deplorable state, to which your sickness & disorders had reduced you.

LXI.

The disorderly conduct of a Religious generally proceeds either from want of a true vocation, or from not having been well instructed in her obligations in her noviceship, from her letting herself be led away by the imperfect ones of the Monastery, or from conversing in the Parlours with secular people. When a young person enters into a Monastery with a good vocation, & falls into the hands of a prudent, pious, understanding mistress, capable of her office; when she applies herself to profit by the care of such a mistress, & coming out of her noviceship she endeavours to keep the spirit of it; when she avoids going to the Grate as much as she can, contracts no culpable, or blamable friendship within, neither with the Pensioners, nor with the Religious who are dissipated & restless, but lives retired in the observance of her Rule & is punctual to her obligations. This person, this happy person preserves her innocence, enjoys all the advantages of her precious vocation, tastes all the sweets of it, advances more & more in the way of virtue, enriches herself with merits, gloriously

finishes her course in the sight of God & his Saints, & dies in the peace of the Lord. In this sense it may be said truly that a religious state is an anticipated Paradise.

LXII.

Let us compare with this holy & good Religious one who is unhappily perverted; let us suppose she had a true vocation, & that she behaved herself in the noviceship, as she ought to do, which at length finishes, & she comes out of it; & at this critical time let us observe her. If by a wise retreat she imitates her just spoke of, she will be happy for the whole course of her life, & blessed for all eternity. But if, being no longer under the care & tuition of her Mistress, she abandons herself to a false liberty; if she neglects her exercises, loses the spirit of recollection, & puts on gay, dissipated air; if she grows familiar with the great Pensioners, who have the spirit of the world; if she engages herself in any particular friendship with those Religious who are remiss & dissipated; if she seeks to become acquainted with seculars, & to be known by them, she is lost. And should almighty God grant her hereafter the grace of repentance, ah! How this time of her going astray will make her weep & lament; & should she not repent, how rigorous will be the account she must give at her death; how terrible the pain she will then endure.

LXIII.

Let us enter into the interior of this world Religious, & lay open the wounds of her soul. O how deserving is she of compassion! Does she tend to perfection, as her state

RELIGIOUS.

41

obliges her to? So far from it, she would
 push to be thought devout. Does she observe
 her Rule? Alas! She habitually transgresses
 without scruple, & even without remorse.
 Does she recite her office with devotion?
 No, all in her is gone astray & wandering;
 her senses, her imagination & her heart. She
 cares about, she laughs, she runs on, she
 observes no ceremony, she gives a full scope
 to her mind to gad where it pleases, & sighs
 after nothing but the end of prayer. Does she
 perform her meditation well? Much after the
 same manner as she says her office. Does she
 read good pious books? She reads perhaps
 some Romances & Tragedies. Let us add
 her unto her sins against her vows, against
 charity & other religious virtues; those she
 commits in the Parlour, & those she is guilty
 of with her irregular companions. But what is
 most deplorable, & ought to make one tremble
 for her, is, she goes to confession, & it is
 without contrition; she goes to communion,
 & it is with a sacrilegious disposition. Thus
 this Religious, who had begun well, at the
 coming out of her noviceship, like a vessel
 coming out of the harbour, & overtaken by a
 storm, is shipwrecked, & not only once, but
 thousand times. And all the difference to be
 made betwixt her & a sinner in the world, is,
 that this has not abused so many Sacraments,
 or so many means of salvation, as she has
 profaned & lavished away.

LXIV.

Let us suppose a Religious has with her a
 Niece, a Pensioner, whom she has brought
 up from her childhood, & to whom she has

given all her love & friendship. This young person has no disposition to be a Religious but the Aunt, who consults only her own natural affection, & self love, has a desire to draw her to Religion; & this she does with so much the greater eagerness, as the Parents of the girl, encumbered perhaps with many children, would be glad to save what it would cost them to place her in the world. Let us hear the reasons she suggests to her, & see by which side she attacks her young heart to bring her to answer her views. Does she propose to her motives of sanctification; to offer in sacrifice to God the hopes & expectations of the world; to consecrate herself entirely to his glory & to his service; to renounce to herself, & raise a spiritual edifice of perfection in her soul, which will one day entitle her to a distinguished place in heaven. These views are too pure & too holy; she neither relishes, nor perhaps knows them herself. Let us then hear her speak. I love you my dear Niece, & I shall always love you; you will be my comfort & consolation & I will procure you all those that are in my power. Your Parents will do things honourably, & will make no difficulty about your fortune; & you shall have as neat furniture as any in the Monastery. They will allow you a considerable pension, with which you may abundantly procure whatever pleases you; & make yourself be esteemed in the convent by reparations, or presents to the church & monastery. All the community who knows you from your infancy, & to which you was always very dear, will receive you with open arms

love you extreamly ; they will give you a pretty cell , & you shall be in mine as much as you please ; & all I have for my use shall be at your command. You wont be much confined in the noviceship , where you will often recreate yourself with your companions, because your Mistress is not a peevish or morose woman :: after your profession you will have a reasonable liberty ; your relations will come to see you as often as you please , & those of my acquaintance will often visit you , as they do me. When you are sick , I will take care of you , & will not rely upon any other. In a word you will be content , happy & exempt from all the vexations people of the world are daily exposed to. Admirable lesson ! Wonderful motives which you give to your pupil to induce her to consecrate herself to God ! Is this the door you open to introduce her into a religious state ? O blindness of self love ! I tell you , that this person is the worst present you can possibly make to your Monastery. This Niece , this young pupil , whom you thus draw to Religion by indirect and sinister ways , which almighty God did never teach nor prescribe , will one day perhaps repent herself of her engagement ; the community will repent their having received her , & you yourself will be sorry for having introduced her. But you did not seek the glory of God ; you only sought yourself , & it is just you should find yourself.

LXV.

Thus are young persons wheedled sometimes into Monasteries. One while it's an enemy ; another while it's a friend ; sometimes

it's interest ; & in these occasions the vocation is not consulted or regarded ; notwithstanding this they pretend to have good subjects. They will be good if it is God who gives them to you ; but I will not answer for it if you give them to yourselves ; on the contrary, God will never prosper what is the work of yourself love ; & perhaps you will be the first to feel the sad effects of your impudence , & of your selfish views. It will not be improper to mention here another indiscretion of some Religious so jealous of their pupils, that should they take a resolution of becoming Religious in another Monastery , they would in their sight be guilty of high treason. They leave no stone unturned to divert them from there are no reproaches but what they make them ; no artifice but what they use to hinder them ; & what is still more astonishing , is that those Religious would have said nothing if they had resolved to establish themselves in the world. They would even have helped & assisted them , as much as was in their power whilst their resolution to consecrate themselves to almighty God in another Monastery excites all their jealousy , as if it was a preference injurious to them , & to their house.

LXVI.

We have hitherto spoke of renouncing the world in general, & to that particular world which reigns in the interior of some Monasteries. Happy those sacred Virgins who have sincerely renounced to them both ; but freed from these two great enemies , they have as yet to renounce to themselves ! Nor may we dissemble that this is the longest & hardest

RELIGIOUS. 45

ercise, which demands greater zeal, greater courage, & a more constant application to succeed in. "Tis a greater labour to resist vices & passions,," says excellently well the author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 1. c. 25. n. 11.) "than to toil at bodily labours.," And in another place, (B. 2. c. 3.) He says; "A man must go thro' a long & great conflict in himself, before he can learn fully to overcome himself, & to draw his whole affection towards God.,"

LXVII.

This self renunciation is an exercise of our whole lives; we must begin by it, we must continue in it, & end with it. We must not flatter ourselves we shall persevere long in the practice of religious virtues, if, when we engage in it, we do not propose to ourselves this holy renunciation. We only maintain ourselves & advance, in proportion to the progress we make in it; & our arriving at the highest degree of piety only follows it.

They advance,," says again this pious Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST (B. 1. c. 25. n. 3.) "most of all others in virtues, who strive more manfully to overcome those things which they find more troublesome, or contrary to them. For there a man makes greater progress, & merits greater grace, where he overcomes himself more, & mortifies himself in spirit.

LXVIII.

All devotion, which is neither built upon, nor accompanied with this holy self denial, is weak, unsteady, & liable to a thousand illusions, because in not labouring to die to ourselves.,"

we let our passions live in us, we let our senses grow & strengthen themselves, we let self love reign without comptrall, which seduces us, blinds us, & casts us into a abyss of woes. How many Religious, on account of their exterior, pass for very virtuous who nevertheless on the least contradiction shew themselves unworthy of that character. How many others who with the greatest difficulty can scarce be made to bend under the yoke of obedience, when what is ordered thwarts their humour & inclinations? How greatly does self love insinuate it self into their actions of piety, and render them defective in the sight of God? And all these evils spring from a want of dying to, & renouncing ourselves.

LXIX.

To root out vice, to subdue our passions to mortify our senses, to render fix & steady the inconstancy & levity of our mind; to curb the depraved affections of our heart to bring self love under subjection, is the holy self abnegation we talk of, is what renders our piety solid, & what is wanting to those whose virtue consists in words & speculation & who, as may be said, are cast away on a grain of sand, howsoever little the wind of temptation may rise. We cant too soon apply ourselves to this holy self denial; the more we differ, the more difficulties we shall be subject to afterwards. Bad habits once contracted are like a tree that has took deep root & which can't be pulled up but with great difficulty; whereas in using violence against ourselves in the beginning we stop with great

ease the progress of vice. The passions instead of gaining strength, grow weak, & that appeared hard & almost insuperable, becomes easy & we embrace it with joy.

LXX.

Let us address this truth more particularly to the novices & young professed who are yet out of the noviciate, & may it be printed in their hearts in characters not to be effaced. If they faithfully & truly renounce themselves, there is all reason to hope they will one day arrive at the height of perfection; but if they neglect it, they run the hazard of passing the same all their lives, & of crawling, as one may say, like vile insects in the dirt & mire of their vices. A young Religious ought to look upon the time she is in the noviciate, as the most precious & most memorable of her life, in which she may, with more leisure & with more effectual means, labour at renouncing to herself, & she ought to propose never to come out of the noviciate till she has acquired a facility in mortifying her senses, in quelling her humour, in resisting her passions, in renouncing to her own judgment, to her own will & to the love of herself.

LXXI.

We read in the lives of the fathers of the desert that they become more interior & more spiritual, in proportion to the labour & pains they had taken to die to themselves under the discipline of an ancient master, who a long time had tried them by thwarting & contradicting their inclination & self love. The most eminent for holiness were those,

who best knew from the beginning to submit themselves perfectly to this difficult trial. Would to God the young Religious, convinced of the marvelous effects of this holy renouncing themselves, would by the example of these great models of religious perfection animate themselves to practise it with all their heart. Would to God their fervour would carry them so far as to importune their Masters to make them frequently exercise the acts thereof. O how agreeable would such an emulation be to almighty God ! O how great a comfort & consolation would it be to Religion ! & how great graces, & what rich crowns would they not procure to themselves by it ! The Monasteries in which these maxims are not relished, are not those in which God is the best served & most glorified ; & the Religious who despise these practices know no more the perfection of the state, than a person who never heard talk of it.

LXXII.

There is no true peace, no true happiness but for those Religious who seriously apply themselves to this holy renunciation. The more they struggle against their passions & their unmortified desires, the more they enter into, & enjoy the liberty of the children of God. They suffer on the contrary all manner of ways, when they give themselves up to their unmortified spirits, & to their unruled appetite. The agitation of their mind caused by it's dissipation, and that of their heart occasioned by the remorse of conscience, & by the impetuosity of their passions, render

RELIGIOUS. 49

like ships, beat by a tempest, & perpetually tossed about in a storm: & how can they live content in this trouble, & with those long stings? Examine narrowly an unmarried Religious & compare the situation of her life with that of another who renounces her self. Every thing is hard to the first; office, prayer, obedience, poverty, regular observance, inclosure. Whatever belongs to Religion is a burden to her, a burden nevertheless she is forced to carry because she cannot change her state. If she is alone, she feels all the heaviness of retirement, without enjoying its consolations, & given up to her own reflections she is exposed to all the agitations of her conscience without finding any thing to encourage her & remove her fears. If she is with the other Religious, her unmortified spirit renders their company painful & tiresome, because she has not that true charity, which alone makes the union of Communities not only tolerable, but even sweet & comfortable. Does she seek for any consolation without, she exposes herself to be criticized. Whether she seeks it often, or but seldom, her pleasure is rare, & too short to render her content. Thus she neither has the consolations of heaven, nor those of the world; because she makes herself unworthy of the first; & is hinder'd from enjoying the second: or if she does enjoy any one of these, its only by stealth & in part, and that with so great a mixture of gall, that the pain is greater than the pleasure. On the contrary every thing is good, & contributes to the peace of a Religious who knows how to re-

nounce herself. God dwells in her, & with him his holy Spirit the Comforter. Regular observance, obedience, common charity, that belongs to Religion is sweet & agreeable to her, because her sole pleasure & consolation consists in fulfilling of her obligations. As to God she is fully content; as to creatures she has nothing to fear, because they have nothing to reproach her with; she finds peace in herself & joy by a good testimony of conscience. To conclude, there is more suffering & more pain in following ones unbridled passions than in resisting & overcoming them.

LXXIII.

You will never succeed in this holy reformation of your self, unless you set about it with zeal, with courage, with application, with assiduity & with a determinate resolution succeeding let it cost what it will. Here must be no backwardness, no pusillanimity, no despondency. If you fear the labour, if you do not use violence against yourself, if you soon grow tired, if you will to day & will not tomorrow, if you only act by sallies, by caprice or by humour, more than by the spirit of God, so far from bringing the work of your reformation to a happy issue; scarce will you have begun, or persisted for a little while, you will grow weary, you will fall off & soon abandon it entirely. Neither will you succeed if you do not make use of prayer, vigilance, & of patience. Of prayer, to obtain of almighty God those succours you stand in need of, & therefore ought frequently have recourse to it in all your difficulties.

RELIGIOUS. 51

your greatest refuge. Of vigilance to be
ays on your guard against the enemies of
ur salvation, & chietly against yourself;
cause the devil is always on the watch, &
carry within us a thousand domestick ene-
es ever ready to betray us, & to open to
n the gate of our souls. Of patience, either
bear with meekness the pain you find,
pecially at the beginning, in watching over
using violence to yourself, or to not let
rself be cast down under the difficulties
a meet; or not to grow tired with the
gth of the work, or in short not to lose
urage when you fall, but always to amend
ur faults, & make new efforts to reclaim
rself entirely.

LXXIV.

Let this work of self abnegation be never
t of your fight. Propose it to yourself in
ur prayers, in your communions, in all the
ercises of piety & means of salvation which
eligion furnishes you with. Refer all these to
s end so necessary for the sanctification of
ur soul; & above all apply to this inten-
n whatever presents it self to you to suffer
the love of God, which will be doubly
vantageous to you, since on the one hand
u will bear it with patience & with merit
fore God, & on the other you will procure
rself particular graces which will power-
ly assist you to overcome yourself, & make
u advance in it. It is also very advizable in
the morning either at meditation, or at
ayer to endeavour to foresee the occasions
the day, in which you know by past expe-
ence you are often accustomed to commit

any faults. Represent these occasions to yourself & take a firm resolution at the feet of JESUS-CHRIST to be faithful to him. This precaution cannot be but of great use to you since we more easily escape & avoid the snares which we perceive & see at a distance.

LXXV.

Never lose courage whatsoever difficulty you find in overcoming yourself, altho' you should often relapse into those faults you propose to correct. Nothing can be of a worse consequence to you in this exercise than fear & discouragement. So far from removing you from evil, it takes away from you the power of remedying it. It's an artifice of the evil Spirit, & at the same time an effect of pride & self love, to let ourselves be cast down when we fail, to make us have thoughts of despair against God, & of anger against ourselves, as if our efforts were useless & laboured in vain. The devil full of artifice has seduced a great many by this means & entirely diverted them from their undertaking. But let us learn from the failings of others, to be more wise & more prudent in rising up as often as we fall, & renewing our resolutions; & altho' we must not flatter ourselves in our faults, which would be to want the fear of God & to abuse his goodness, yet we must have patience with ourselves, since almighty God with so great mercy bears with us & invites us to mend & correct ourselves; whatsoever therefore misery & weakness we find in ourselves, however great may be the number of our faults, or whatever fault we frequently fall into, let us not be tired, let

be troubled nor be dismay'd ; let us with
 sh courage & resolution engage in the
 conflict against ourselves, resolutely determi-
 d not to give over till we have obtained a
 mplete victory. " Fight ,, says the Author
 the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST (B. 3. c. 6.
 5.) " like a good soldier, & if sometimes
 thou fall thro' frailty, rise up again with
 greater strength than before, confiding in
 the more abundant grace of God. ,,

LXXVI.

You must not flatter yourself in your faults ;
 or disguise them, nor reserve any, attacking
 ly some, & sparing others. You must on
 e contrary love to know yourself thorou-
 ly, to think that in yourself evil, which is
 il ; to hate in yourself what God hates ; &
 a word to cut of whatever may render
 u ever so little disagreeable to God. To
 ke account of great faults, & to take no
 re to avoid & amend the lesser ones is
 posing yourself to fall insensibly into great
 es. Nature of it self alone weighs us down,
 d the inclination that draws us to evil is
 ick & violent, if we do not resist man-
 ly. We ought indeed to detest above all,
 ose sins which give death to the soul ; but
 e ought also to hate every thing that is
 displeasing to God, how soever slight it may
 appear to us. It may happen that a fault,
 ro' the blindness of self love, or because we
 e too much familiarized with evil, may
 em trifling to us, whilst almighty God jud-
 es it quite otherwise ; He who decides things
 ot according to the false opinions of men, but
 according to the rules of his truth & his justice.

A Religious ought to take care not to willfully and against the checks of her conscience into any faults, tho' trifling ones, because it would be in some measure, affected to displease almighty God, & would show she has not that respect for, nor that fear of him, she ought to have. Besides such faults are always very prejudicial to the soul; the more frequently she falls into them, the more does the fear of God, & the relish of virtue diminish & decay in her; & therefore she falls into a dangerous state of tepidity & into a deplorable insensibility of heart, that incites her to sin without remorse, & renders what belongs to the service of God loathsome to her. Let us set this point, which is of the greatest consequence, in its full light. There are three sorts of venial sins to be distinguished; some we commit more thro' inadvertency than on purpose; there are others we commit knowingly, but of things of very little importance in themselves; there are also others, which mortals call themselves, are only venial in the circumstances we commit them, either for want of full deliberation, or because there is no matter sufficient for a mortal sin. The weakness inseparable from our corrupt nature makes us fall into the first sort, & the Saints themselves were not exempt from them. We ought therefore neither to be astonished when we are subject to them, nor lose courage when we fall into them. We may even make use of our own weakness very profitably to humble ourselves & weep before God, & thus turn

the good of our souls, what the devil
ould have serve to their ruin.

LXXVIII.

By the attention a Religious has not to fall
voluntarily into venial sins, one principally
covers the care she has of her soul, &
zeal to advance in the way of perfection;
whereas on the contrary if she despises small
faults, if she treats as scrupulous & weak
those of her sisters who are careful to avoid
them, she may be look'd upon as a soul in
great danger of being lost; because in fami-
lizing herself with lesser faults she comes
to such a pitch as not to have any fear of
committing great ones.

LXXIX.

It is but too easy to fall into these great
faults, particularly when a person is not suffi-
ciently on her guard against those we said
were mortal in their nature, & which are
only venial when committed, on account of
some circumstance or other that excuses them
from being grievous sins. Ah, how easily
may one pass here from little to great! How
easy even is it to deceive ones self in taking,
thro' an erroneous conscience, that for little
is nothing, which is very considerable in
the eyes of God! Let every thing then appear
to you of consequence to your soul, as soon
as ever there is the least danger of offending
mighty God. Fear the least fault as you
ould dread a serpent. It is a greater harm
to misfortune for you to commit one venial
deliberately than it is to be devoured by a
dragon. A Lukewarm Religious & who has
not a timorous conscience may perhaps look

upon this as exaggerated : She would judge quite otherwise was she to see the deformity & ugliness of venial sin , as it is seen & known in the other world. But let her , till the curtain is drawn & the veil removed , make use of the light of faith , & learn that the pains of hell , all horrible & dreadful as they are , are not so great an evil or harm as venial sin willfully committed.

LXXX.

Some Religious persons talk with great facility of spiritual things , they scarce know any other language , & only relish & esteem what is the most sublime in a spiritual life & nevertheless these very persons , who seem by their talk to be arrived at a high degree of virtue are oftentimes so full of defects , so wedded to their own opinions , & so easily fall into venial sins , even of the grossest kind , so little exact in the practice of those virtues which are contrary to their humour & self love , that they are no more to be known so different is their behaviour & practice from their words. This imperfect state of their souls may it not be imputed to a want of being grounded in the fear of God , & in the horror of sin ; to a want of meditating on the fundamental truths of Religion ; to the uncertainty of life ; the severity of the judgments of God ; the rigorous pains with which he punishes sin , & even the very least sin , in the next world ? They can only meditate on the truths that are comfortable or sublime ; they can only speak of extraordinary graces & of the marvelous , which is more to be admired in the lives of Saints than imitated

and; & they seem to fear debating themselves in meditating on the terrifying truths proper to inspire them with a horror of sin. great illusion! These persons stand in need of a Catechism to be better instructed. Of Granada's guide of sinners, and such like books, draw from them the subject of their meditations, & to silence them on every thing that favours of a high flown spirituality. By these sort of humiliations, which their little virtue renders necessary, they will be brought to conceive a just horror of sin, & there would be no farther occasion to reproach them with committing it so often as they do.

LXXXI.

Look upon, as a special grace, the secret inspiration by which almighty God advertises you to be upon your guard, when you are about to fall into any fault, or in danger of being deficient in any point of your Rule. Do not then deceive yourself, nor stop your ears, that you may not hear the voice of God, who prevents you with so great mercy, that you may dissemble to yourself his holy will. If nevertheless not having follow'd this first admonition you should have begun to commit a fault, stop immediately, & do not persist in it contrary to the remorse of your conscience, that continues to reproach you with your infidelity. In short if you have the misfortune not to obey the voice of God at the checks of your conscience till the fault is committed and over, at least raise yourself up from your fall without delay by sincerely asking pardon of God, & prepare yourself by a firm resolution to be more faithful in another occasion.

We make a resolution, & we break it the moment after it is made; we often confess our sins, & we do not mend our lives. Our weakness it's true, is great; but does not the evil also come from our resolutions being weak, & our sorrow superficial? Why are we so industrious to find proper means to succeed in our temporal concerns, & we quite the reverse when the good of our soul is in question? Let us acknowledge we are terrestrial, all abandoned to our senses, & that we are vehement & eager for the things of the earth & for contenting our passions whereas for the practising virtue for our sanctification, we have rather a weak desire than a good & sincere will.

LXXXIII.

When you have taken a resolution to correct yourself of any particular fault, be more watchful than ever over your self, that you may faithfully keep it. The devil will not fail to tempt you to break it, he will lay snares to catch you, & find occasions to make you fall. Nature on the other hand clogged & confined by the purpose you have made, will struggle & endeavour to throw off the yoke that incommodes her, & will revolt & therefore you have need of greater vigilancy & of greater courage, without which you will relapse, as easily as you did before.

LXXXIV.

Were we in our confessions as much ashamed before God for having offended him, as we are before men for an affront or insult done to us; had we as great a sorrow for the

ounds of our souls, as we have for those of
 our bodies; ah how soon would they be fol-
 lowed with amendment! Is it then possible
 human respect should have greater influence
 on our hearts, than that which we owe to
 mighty God? Must we be more sensible to
 the ills of our bodies, than to those of our
 souls, the more noble & more excellent
 part of us? This surely is enough to humble
 & confound us. It is true, for the validity of
 our confessions it is not required that our
 sorrow for our sins should be as sensible,
 as that we have for the loss of a Parent, or
 for a wound received; but it is essentially
 required that this sorrow be true, be sincere,
 from the heart.

LXXXV.

There are some people who are not scru-
 pulous, & who nevertheless are never satis-
 fied about their confessions. They make ex-
 traordinary ones, & are neither the more
 content, nor grow the better for it. This
 would not be in the least astonishing in a
 scrupulous person, her uneasiness about her
 confessions is nothing but the effect of the
 disposition of her mind, always suspicious
 about the state of her conscience. But why
 do others repeat their confessions, & that
 often without any amendment? Shall we be
 mistaken in saying altho' these persons gene-
 rally accuse themselves entirely of all their
 sins, they only make their act of contrition,
 as I may say, by halves. They are sensible
 they belong not to God in the manner &
 way they ought. Their conscience without
 ceasing reproaches them with their remissness

& their continual relapses. They therefore from time to time attempt to reconcile themselves entirely to almighty God by confession which may repair those, with which they are not satisfied. But as it is chiefly to free themselves from the interior remorses that torment them, rather than seriously to engage in the practice of virtue; as they will as yet make use of a certain reserve with almighty God & only give themselves to him so as to be still attach'd to themselves; as they will not embrace a devotion that is easy, commendous, & framed after the ideas of their love; and as they apply themselves more to particularize all their faults than to excite their heart a sincere contrition, it follows that their confessions either produce no conversion, or that their conversion is only transient & of a short duration.

LXXXVI.

If you have any reason to doubt of the validity of your confessions by the habitual carelessness in which you live; I advise you to repair them by an extraordinary confession according to the advice of a wise & prudent Director. But in this case don't do things by halves; do what you are doing so well, that you may not have a necessity of beginning again; & that you may have no other solicitude remain but to seriously advance in the way of perfection. Accuse yourself humbly of all your sins without flattering yourself without disguise, after having sifted the most secret recesses of your heart, to find them out; & employed such a strict examination as an affair of so great consequence, as that

heal

aliving your soul, requires. Above all in this
 ammen earnestly beg of almighty God the
 spirit of compunction, which is what is most
 essential to retrieve lost grace. Excite your-
 self to it from the bottom of your heart, &
 only propose to lead for the future a life
 quite contrary to the remissness of your for-
 mer one. Pray to God earnestly & persevere
 in prayer that you may obtain thro' his mercy
 the pardon of your faults, & grace to begin
 a new life, & to continue in it. Make with
 the advice of your Confessor the necessary
 dispositions to persevere in the course you
 are entering upon, & keep nothing to yourself
 that may hinder you from walking in it freely
 & induce you to go back again. In a word
 engage yourself with a true resolution, a
 manly courage, & a firm confidence in God,
 to this holy conflict against yourself, & do
 not spare yourself, whatever pains or labour
 may cost you. Thus you ought to set about
 a general confession, when it is made to re-
 pair the faults of particular ones. If you go
 about it otherwise, you will be soon uneasy
 & discontent with yourself, & obliged to
 begin a second time.

LXXXVII.

As often as you approach to the Tribunal
 of penance, you ought to do it with the same
 dispositions as if it was to be the last time of
 your life; with the same sorrow for your sins,
 the same humility, the same resolution of
 amendment, the same desire to please God,
 the same recourse to him with confidence in
 his infinite bounty. Ah how soon you would
 be sanctified by such confessions! But there is

reason to fear that going often to confession you only do it slightly, by custom, without respect, without a true desire of amending past faults, & we may say of many Religions on this subject, what Saint Paul heretofore said (1. Cor. c. 11. v. 30.) of some of the faithful on the little dispositions they brought with them to the holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, *Therefore are there many infirm & weak among you & many sleep.*

LXXXVIII.

It is not our design to perplex and unreasonably disturb timorous consciences, nor to represent without reason their frequent confessions as doubtful & suspicious. Those who are the most susceptible of fears & frights on this score, are generally those who perform their duty best. But you who do not in the least strive to correct your faults, who practice no virtue, who have no zeal for your perfection, who disrelish every thing that belongs to the service of God; you who receive your office without respect & without attention; who pass all the time of your Meditations in thinking on whatever first occurs to your minds; you who are slaves to your senses, who live in a continual dissipation, who love nothing but secular conversations, who remain unconcerned in your bad habits without any thought of leaving them; you who are short who have no other Rule than your own fancies, who are with your Sisters only to exercise their patience, who have no regard, no consideration, no respect for your Superior; you who are so attached to your sentiments, who are always ready to dispute

criticise, to murmur, to backbite & de-
 ct; you in a word who do no good, &
 whose actions are all bad, how can you
 pretend that going often to confession without
 change & amendment, it can be thought
 your confessions are accompanied with a sin-
 cere sorrow for the sins you accuse yoursel-
 ves of.

LXXXIX.

Here let us prevent what the scrupulous
 may say, but at the same time let us impugn
 what the presumptuous may alledge.
 To one you will say is without sin; & as our
 exercises, & the occasions we have are al-
 most every day the same, & do not vary,
 it is not surprising we should frequently com-
 mit the same faults. I agree with you that if
 confessions without amendment are generally
 to be suspected, it does not absolutely follow
 that all those which are not accompanied
 with amendment, are to be reputed such.
 The Sacrament of penance remits sin, but
 does not render us impeccable. I grant like-
 wise that not being exposed to the occasions
 of different states, from your own, your sins
 are rather from the occasions of your own
 state. But we do not so much reproach you
 with, and condemn the particular faults you
 commit, as the habit contracted of commit-
 ting them. A habit which you never since-
 rely endeavour or strive to break. It is not
 surprising that having accused yourself of
 having been deficient in the observance of
 your Rule, or of not reciting attentively your
 office you should relapse; but it is surprising
 without reason that doing nothing to amend

64 THE PERFECT

yourself, never taking any care of your salvation, making no account of your Rule, always passionately fond of the world, always backbiting, murmuring, dissipated, without putting any constraint upon yourself in any occasion, it is, I say surprising that living in such a manner you should so easily appease your conscience about your confessions.

XC.

We make a quite different judgement of a Religious who has the saving her soul at heart, who endeavours to acquit herself of her regular duties, and applies herself to the practice of virtue. Her accusing herself may be on the same subject, because the faults she commits regard her exercises which are every day the same. But we do not perceive in her a bad habit thoroughly formed & contracted, or any negligence, any remarkable remissness; if therefore she accuses herself of a want of attention at her prayers, of not having on certain occasions meekness or charity enough, & the like; we easily see the care she has of her soul prevails & outweighs her relapses, & we presume without difficulty that she accuses herself of the same sins, not for want of a true contrition, but because she is not impeccable.

XCI.

Approach to the Tribunal of penance with modesty & humility, & a heart penetrated with respect & compunction. Perform seriously & piously an action which is the most serious & most holy of Religion. Do not amuse yourself with needless discourses in the Confessional before you begin your confession.

If you should dissipate & weaken those sentiments of contrition you have endeavoured to excite in your heart. Accuse yourself of your sins plainly without making long histories of them; do not stay longer than is necessary least you make the Religious, who come to confess after you, wait too long. After you have received absolution retire to thank almighty God for the pardon he has granted you, & to fulfill the penance his minister has enjoined you. Perhaps you may say, I only here repeat what every body knows: but every body does not practice it; and therefore it's necessary to repeat it. Remember in short that the sacred Tribunal is not a place to treat of any thing else but what concerns the salvation of your soul.

XCII.

A Religious woman betrays a great weakness in talking of her Director, or of that of others; in being troubled that hers should be upon him the conduct of another Sister, lest he should too much divide his care & give a preference. In curiously watching those Sisters who are longer than the rest with the Director or Confessor. She shews, I say, a great weakness in all these things & others like to them. But what is still worse often occasions trouble in them; charity & peace suffer, or at least the direction comes to this Religious rather a loss of time, than a true means to advance in the way of perfection.

XCIII.

A short and efficacious way to correct yourself of any particular fault is to exercise your-

self faithfully in the practice of the opposite virtue. A Religious, for example, who is too sharp in her answers, ought to study to speak with an extreme mildness. She who loves to rail at & criticise others, ought to resolve with herself never to talk of them but with esteem & veneration. She who is idle and negligent in coming to acts of community, must endeavour to be always there the first. By frequent acts of these virtues, the opposite defects will fall of themselves; & the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST excellently well says, the good & virtuous habit will overcome the bad. To reduce the maxim into practice, you cant do better than to resolve with yourself whenever you have committed any fault to make immediately acts of the contrary virtue, & even to seek the occasion of doing it. You will thereby shew to almighty God the sorrow you have for having displeased him; you will make amends to yourself in some measure for the loss you suffered, & will repair it the best you are able. You will hinder the fault you committed drawing you into another, & you will prevent from familiarizing with, & attaching herself to evil; which is of utmost consequence to you.

XCIV.

To proceed with greater order in your amendment & with greater security, lay the axe to the root of that fault or passion which predominates in you. That is to say which makes you fall the ofteneft, with which you reproach yourself the most, & which costs you most pains to root out; for by these

arks you may know it. Each one has his dominant vice ; in some it is sloth , & idleness ; in others it is pride , anger , or sensuality. Every Religious ought to study herself & make use of the lights of her Director to find out her own & to overcome it. The Author of the Imitation of JESUS - CHRIST intended without doubt to instill this practice in us when he says we must labour with vigilance to acquire the virtue which is most necessary for us , which in effect is that which absolutely destroys the predominant vice in us.

XCV.

What ought to be a great comfort and consolation to those Religious who have more violent passions than others , who experience themselves more rude attacks & have a nature more averse to good , is , that applying themselves with assiduity & great fervour to overcome themselves , they may make a greater progress in this holy renunciation , & acquire greater merit in the sight of God , than those who , being endowed with a better Nature & more inclined to good , labour with less fervour in their advancement to perfection. " He , , says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST (B. I. c. n. 4.) " that is diligent & zealous altho' he has more passions to fight against , will be able to make a greater progress than another that has fewer passions , but is withall less fervent in the pursuit of virtue.

XCVI.

The predominant vice is almost always the same with , or rather follows the natural bad humour & temper. Thus in a Religious of

a bilious or cholerick temper ; anger & impatience is the predominant passion. This makes her so hard to be pleased ; renders her incapable of bearing any thing from her Sisters , & thereby she becomes insupportable to them. This makes her fly out so easily on all occasions , & in short is the reason why her humour is incompatible with community & charity. She that is of a phlegmatick disposition has laziness & sloth for her capital vice ; she has no zeal either for the temporal employments of the Monastery , or for the spiritual advancement of her soul. She has no fervour for the glory of God , no exactness in acts of community , no attention to be serviceable to others , no compassion for the sufferings of her neighbour. And the same may be said of all other characters. O how zealously ought the Mistress of novices to apply herself to root out of her young their bad natural disposition & temper ; & how fervently ought the young Religious to correspond & second in this her endeavours , if they have a mind to profit & advance in virtue ! What would a Monastery be if every one was to follow her own humour ? The bilious & cholerick would always be in dispute ; the phlegmatick could be employed in nothing ; those of a sanguine constitution would only laugh & jeer & mind nought but themselves ; and the melancholy ones would always carry about them their pensive dull humour. Thus a Monastery would be no more a Community of sacred Virgins , but a collection of all sorts of defects.

We may say of our bad natural inclination, what the Physicians say of our heart, that it is the first that lives in us, & the last that dies. This is true, when one does not take care to bring it under, & that in the beginning; for the more one advances in years, the stronger it grows; & the greatest service that can be done to young Religious, as well for their own good, as for that of the Monastery, is to accustom them to subdue it entirely. Some Religious are as unfortified at the end of their days & as violent in their passions, as if they had but just entered the Monastery; some ancient ones are as barren & void of virtue as a young novice that took the veil but a few days. This evil proceeds from neglecting to subdue & overcome their defective & bad disposition, & from always following it without ever putting any constraint on themselves. This is what young Religious ought to take into consideration; they ought to comprehend of what importance it is to begin early to use violence against their own natural temper, if they have in mind not to be one day reproached with what they find to criticise in others.

XCVIII.

Reckon in the number of the faults which you ought to correct & root out, those by which you may give scandal to your Sisters, or exercise their patience, in case you are guilty of any. You know the Community is disedified at such & such a thing that you do; that your often resorting to the Speak-house to see such or such a person; you know it occa-

sions them to murmur, & that your Superior is very much displeased with it. Do not think I act innocently; I do nothing out of the way; I have no bad design; my conscience reproaches me with nothing; there are others who do more than I; & of whom nevertheless no notice is taken; it's jealousy that speaks; so much the worse if they are scandalized, they are only so many weak heads. Such reasons are wretched; such excuses entirely frivolous. It ought to be enough for you that what you do, gives bad example or occasion to murmur, for you to reform or amend it; you ought to do it as well for the love of your Sisters, & for the common good of the Monastery, in which you are obliged to live without reproach, as for the particular good of your own soul, which you load with all those faults, which by your bad example you are the occasion of others committing. The same is to be said of those faults which are contrary to charity, which in proportion as they are considerable occasion great prejudice to Monasteries by the troubles & divisions they excite & stir up.

XCIX.

Convinced of the frailty of human nature, fly with care from those occasions which your own sad experience has shewed you to be any ways dangerous. Let us never trust to ourselves, since we have so much reason to be diffident of our own strength. *The devil says Saint Peter (1. Ep. c. 5. v. 8.) as a roaring Lyon goeth about seeking to devour us.* The world surrounds us on all sides; these are two terrible adversaries; but the greatest we have

selves ; & if with temerity we expose ourselves we shall soon feel the effect of our sinfulness. A Religious seldom finds in her life the occasions of sinning grievously ; nevertheless it is not impossible , & would to God the Angel of Darknels was never to be seen in the assemblies of the children of men ! The evil more easily comes from within , by the conversations at the Grate & the Parlours ; by the friendships there contracted ; by letters written & received ; by bad books procured. We need not enter here into the detail of the spiritual evils which may happen to a Religious by these ways of perdition. In two words , this is what she ought to do in these cases ; if the evil comes from within , she must pluck out the right eye that causes her scandal ; if from without , she must pluck out also the left. Let her not here plead either honour , repugnancy , difficulty or any other pretext whatever ; the more she endeavours to spare & excuse herself the more also will she plunge herself into the abyss of evil.

C.

We ought to be on our guard against all these vices & all those passions that conspire together to work our ruin , but we have none so dangerous as a disordinate love of ourselves ; a passion that pushes us on to seek ourselves in all we do & to refer every thing to ourselves. Certainly self love is so much the more to be feared as it is flattering , subtle , insinuant , cunning & has subterfuges & evasions without end. Is the more to be feared , as it is then nearest us , when

we think it at a distance ; as it assaults us with
greatest fury when we think we ought to fear
it least ; as it never sleeps , tho' it seems
sometimes quiet & easy ; as it seeks the be-
ter to betray us , when it seems to flatter us
as it feigns to be overcome , to surprise us
with greater fierceness ; as it seems to gain
new strength from its defeats & to revive
as I may say , out of its ashes , when we
reckon it destroy'd in us. It is the more
to be feared as it follows us like our shadow
and is not only near us , but within us ,
as intimate to us as our very heart & the
marrow of our bones. As it robs us of our
good works & excites us to bad ones , &
it expects even till we are rich in merits
to strip us of them entirely. How formidable
an enemy ! Who will dare to despise it
and not be on his guard against it ? If you
have undertaken a reformation of yourself
if you've made any proficiency in virtue ,
you have acquired perfection cease not to
be on the watch to escape its snares. How-
ever little you cease to be vigilant , twill gain
great advantages over you ; & if you let your-
self be hurried away with it , had you reach'd
the top of the holy mountain , it would cast
you down headlong into a bottomless aby-
ss. Never enter into parley or discussion with it
nor harken to the vain pretexts it will allege
when you are about correcting any fault
overcoming any contradiction , fighting
against nature , or practising any act of virtue
contrary to it. It will suggest a thousand ob-
jections to your mind , sometimes in propo-
sing difficulties , which it will magnify & make
appear

RELIGIOUS. 73

ear invincible ; sometimes in alledg^{ing} laws of good breeding , of wisdom & human prudence ; sometimes in producing reasons which have some shew & appearance of good ; it will endeavour to stop & diminish your fervour , lead you from argument to argument , & serve you as an enchanting siren who by her enveigling voice will lull you asleep in your bad habits , in your defects , in your errors , in your illusions , and in your imperfections. In order to prevent this , stop the ears of your heart without delay , & never listen to her. If you have a mind to succeed in renouncing the world & yourself ; if you desire to succeed in acquiring religious virtues ; if you desire to arrive at the perfection of your state , never listen but to the voice of your Rule , to the voice of obedience , to the voice of the Gospel. It is the way to walk in the paths of truth.

Let us finish & conclude this first part with the beautiful words of the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST (B. 3. c. 53.) which seem to contain in short all we have hitherto said.

„ If thou desire to arrive at a high perfection , thou must begin manfully & set the ax to the root , that thou may'st root out & destroy thy secret inordinate inclination to thy self & to all selfish & earthly goods. This vice by which a man inordinately loves himself is at the bottom of all that which is to be rooted

G

74 THE PERFECT

„ out & overcome in us. Which evil be
 „ once conquered & brought under, a gr
 „ peace & tranquillity will presently en
 „ But because there are few that labour
 „ die perfectly to themselves, & that fi
 „ tend beyond themselves, therefore do th
 „ remain entangled in themselves, nor c
 „ they be elevated in spirit above themselv
 „ But he that desires to walk freely w
 „ JESUS-CHRIST must mortify all his wick
 „ & irregular affections, & must not clea
 „ to any thing created with any concup
 „ cence or private love. „





THE PERFECT RELIGIOUS.

PART THE SECOND. *Of The Practice of Virtue.*

ART. I.

A Gardiner is not content to root up the weeds that grow in his garden, he sets good plants & flowers, which he waters & cultivates with great care. Like him a Religious ought to cultivate & adorn her soul. She must not only root out all vices and defects, she must also plant & nurse up all christian virtues. All the ambition of a holy Spouse of Christ should be to please & merit the love of her celestial Spouse; & it is by decorating herself with the rich ornaments of virtues, she will become agreeable to him; it is by a faithful practice of them she will deserve his complaisance & his divine love.

II.

You carry in your veil & in your habit the respectable marks of your consecration to JESUS-CHRIST; you dwell in his holy house,

you have but one roof with him, since corporally, in the B. Sacrament, resides your Church. Your Constitutions, your exercises are instituted for his worship & his glory. But this is not enough to comply with your destination; the practice of religious virtues is also necessary; without them you have only a beautiful appearance & outward show of good, your call & vocation will only serve one day to your severer condemnation, if not accompanied with the practice of religious virtues. "The life of a good Religious, says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST (B. 1. c. 19. n. 1.) "ought to be eminent in all virtues, that he may be such interiorly, as he appears to men in his exterior. And with good reason ought he to be more in his interior than he exteriorly appears. Because he that beholds us is God, of whom we ought exceedingly to stand in awe, wherever we are, & like Angels walk pure in his sight."

III.

Without religious virtues & with the bare exterior marks of your Religion you resemble a tree loaded with leaves and flowers but without fruit, & they are the fruits of life which almighty God expects to find in you. It is to gather them that He withdrew you from the world & placed you in a Monastery, as a young tree transplanted from a poor barren soil into one that is well prepared & manured; & if you do not bring forth any fruit, what else can you hope to expect from JESUS-CHRIST but what happened to the barren fig-tree of which

RELIGIOUS. 77

explained in the Gospel & order'd to be cut
down, that another put in it's place might
occupy the ground more profitably.

IV.

Happy is that Religious who dies young
when in a short time she holily finishes her
course in making haste to fill up the mea-
sure of perfection by a faithful & constant
practice of all virtues. But woe & the worst
woes to her whom God, tired as it were,
with her continual infidelities, snatches out
of this world to make her place be occupied
by another that may fill it up more worthily!
What will not a Religious reproach herself
at the hour of her death, if she has ne-
glected to practice the virtues of her state,
not having had the means of doing it in so great
abundance! What motive of grief & fear
will God will say to her what he hereto-
fore said to his chosen People under the pa-
ra-
ble of a vineyard which he had planted,
which he had cultivated with so much care,
which he surrounded with a strong wall &
fortified with a tower for it's defence, &
which notwithstanding in lieu of bringing
forth fruit & grapes, produced nothing but
thorns & brambles

V.

Almighty God has separated you from the
world as he heretofore separated the Jewish
people from other Nations: He has chose
you by a preference full of mercy, as he
made use of a predilection in favour of the
Chosen People; He has planted you with his
right hand, & placed you by the special grace
of the vocation he gave you, in a Monastery

as in his closed up Garden & his favourite ground. He has surrounded you with a double hedge & a wall of defence, that your solemn vows and your inclosure. He has cultivated you by an infinite number of graces & means of salvation which he has given to you. Good inspirations, good interior motions, prayers, lectures, exhortations, retreats, good examples, &c. &c. He has placed near unto you the sacred place from whence as from their source all graces run down copiously upon you, by the daily Sacrifice of the Mass, by the constant presence of the most blessed Sacrament of your Tabernacles, by the conveniency you have of often approaching to it & partaking of it. If with all these admirable effusions of his goodness you imitate the perfidy of the Jews, what have you to hope or expect? The application is easy to be made, & the consequence follows naturally.

VI.

Do so many favours, so many privileges, so many graces, so many marks of a particular mercy of God indicate that he will content himself with an ordinary virtue in you, & with the hopes you will serve him indifferently & so so? Has he raised you to the dignity of his holy Spouse, for you to love him only as a stranger? Has he distinguished you by a predilection to receive any other return than a common affection? After his great liberality or rather prodigality towards you, will he support & bear with your being avaritious in his regard? O ingratitude & insensibility of your heart! T

more you have been favoured, the more you ought to be grateful; the more excellent your state is, the more eminent ought to be your piety; you ought to be holy, since in Religion every thing preaches, every thing inspires holiness, you ought to aspire to become perfect, since a vocation to a religious state is a call to perfection.

VII.

I leave to others more courageous than myself to aspire at religious perfection. It is enough for me to stick to the observance of the formal precepts of my Rule. Happy to enter Heaven & to be placed in the lowest rank of all. Such is the language of tepidity, of sloth, of disgust in the service of God, of self love & of the world in a slack & careless Religious. Whosoever you are who think so unworthily, & whatever Rule you profess, austere or easy, you know not the obligations of your state. But I am, you may say, in a Monastery where they live more like Ladies than like Religious. How can one possibly aspire at perfection, & to what perfection must one aspire? Are you Religious, or not? Decide the question. If you are not, what is here said does not regard you. If you are, you cannot make use of an exception against a Rule which is for all persons of your state, in whatever Monastery they are. Now the perfection you ought to aim at is that of a perfect detachment from the world, is that of christian virtues, of the love of God, by the means which Religion furnishes you with, & to comprehend all in one word you ought to aspire to that perfection which will sanctify you in the Rule you profess.

All Religious are not obliged to make use of the same means to arrive at perfection or more properly, their perfection does not consist in the performance of the same practices. Some fight, as may be said, under the colours of a rigid poverty; some under those of silence and solitude; some under those of corporal austerities; & others under the standard of charity. We may here apply what the Royal Prophet says (Ps. 44. v. 14.) *that all the beauty of the kings daughter is within clothed round about with varieties.* Hence it is not necessary a Benedictine should wear the heavy rough habit of a poor Clare or Carmelite; nor that a Carmelite should signalize her charity in the service of the poor like a hospital Nun, to fulfill her vocation. Every one ought to follow the spirit of her institute & tend to perfection by the way of her Rule. But there is no pretext of mitigation that can dispense with labouring in the practice of religious virtues, nor in acquiring religious perfection; & it is no less impossible for a Dame or Nun of a Royal Abby to save herself without humility & the love of God, than it is for a Capuciness or for a Nun of the *Ave Maria*.

IX.

A Religious that would reckon with JESUS-CHRIST, & measure, as it were, with compasses in her hand how far she may go without incurring his disgrace, little carefull otherwise to serve him generously & perfectly, would give an evident proof of an imperfect mind & disposition. Is sin the only thing she ought to fear? Ought she not likewise to be

RELIGIOUS. 81

aid of not doing enough for her divine Spouse ? Is it enough for a sacred Spouse not to offend him ? Will she give a sufficient testimony of her love for him in not making herself altogether odious to his sight ? Ought she not to strive with all her might to render herself agreeable to him ? O how weak is her love if she confines her affections to such narrow limits ! If you sincerely , as a chosen Spouse , loved him who only is deserving of your love , would you use any reserve ? Why would you put any other condition to the manner of your serving him than that of complying with the designs of his divine Will in your regard.

X.

A faint hearted Religious & one who has a little courage replies , I would willingly undertake the work of acquiring perfection & practise the virtues suitable to my state ; but I would also have it soon at an end , & never that die. I would say another belong entirely to almighty God : but I would that he himself did all in me and for me that it might not cost me so many conflicts & so much violence. I would say a third give myself up to God , but I would not be obliged to renounce so entirely to all the consolations of the world as not to reserve one at least for my self. Thus the one would with little labour & in a short time obtain a glory that will never end. The other desires to be crown'd in Heaven without having fought here upon earth. And the last would have JESUS-CHRIST to give her a high place in his heavenly Kingdom , & in order to ob-

tain it will only give him a heart divided betwixt him & her self-love. Such sentiments denote a covetous terrestrial and narrow heart contrary to that of the Saints, which was generous great and disengaged from the world and all creatures.

XI.

It is an artifice of the Father of lies to represent perfection to a Religious as something either impossible, or so very difficult to obtain as to hinder her from undertaking it. But it is also a no less one to inspire her sometimes with projects of a perfection incompatible with her state, & to feed her mind with the vain Ideas of a sanctity she can no ways follow & comply with in the Rule she professes. It is thus he deceives Religious destined by her vocation to breed & train up young Ladies, by tempting her with a desire of a solitary life; & that he seduces a solitary Recluse by the thoughts she might have practised charity more perfectly in the education of youth. This temptation is not new; in the time of S. Bernard a Religious was troubled with it & desired to retire into a desert to lead an eremitical life. She consulted several Doctors & Learned men, who all answered her that her project was a meer illusion. At length hoping the holy Abbot would be more favourable to her desires, she beg'd him to let her know if she was to follow them. Saint Bernard easily saw her error, and answered, that if she was of the number of the foolish Virgins, she stood in need of a Monastery; & if she was of the number of the wise ones, the Monastery stood in need of her.

RELIGIOUS.
XII.

83

The least inconveniencies occasioned by
of sort of illusions are the loss of time ,
which we spend altogether in vain , feeding
selves with these pious chimera's ; & the
quent distractions we often have in our
ayers & meditations , against which we are
much the less upon our guard , as they
n to be good thoughts , because we pro-
e nothing to ourselves but what is good
at self. But what is dangerous in these pro-
s , is that being taken up with a perfection
t will never exist but in our Ideas , we
elect to work at that which we can acquire
the state & Rule we have embraced. Nay
may even take a disgust to our state by
prevention we are in of never being able
serve God so perfectly in it , as we should
in another , which we represent to oursel-
as more holy & more pleasing to him.
ve then far from you all these vain desires
a perfection it is not in your power to
mpass. Do not think or say , was I in a
nastery more austere & more retired , I
ould labour more & better at my sanctifi-
ion. Error, illusion all this. Settle yourself
acquire the Spirit of your state , to observe
ur Rule punctually , to make a good use
the means of salvation which you have ;
s is what God demands of you , & if you
e negligent in these things , all your desires
another way of perfection will only serve
divert you from that by which God has a
nd you should go to him ; & after a great
al of time lost in your pious speculations ,
u will find at length that the devil has de-

ceived you with the fine appearances of good which at the bottom were nothing but illusions & cheats.

XIII.

A true solid piety is not always found in those persons who make a profession of virtue; & this evil proceeds from their giving to themselves a system of devotion according to their humour & natural inclination. A Religious of an eager temper will meddle with every thing under a pretence of zeal, & does all with an earnestness that shews a dissipated mind. Another of a peaceful & quiet disposition has no zeal for any thing, & is never in haste, not even when her duty obliges her. She that is given to anger, knows not how to excuse any thing in her Sisters; & she that is meek tolerates the abuses she ought to correct. "Some says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST [B. 3. c. 4. n. 4.] "only carry the devotion in their books, some in pictures, & some in outward signs & figures.," plain & evident from all this, that many regulate their conduct in their devotions according to their humour & their prevention; this is the reason they scarce ever do any thing but by an impulse entirely natural; that their piety is inconstant & easily beaten off itself, as their humour changes or is contradicted; that they often deceive themselves taking for a true light what is only an effect of their own temper; that they easily give into illusions & never in short arrive at religious perfection by the exercise of heroic virtues.

Some are exact even to a scruple in certain points, & in others much more essential are so remiss that it is astonishing they do not perceive their own illusion. They are troubled at missing to say some prayers of devotion, whilst on the other side they mortify & vex their Sisters without the least scruple or remorse. They are exact in coming first to exercises of Community, & have no scruple to murmur against their Superior. Hence comes this conscience so relaxed on the one side, & so strict on the other? What a contrast of exactness & of infidelity? May not these persons be reproached with having in their pretended devotion divers weights & several measures? (Prov. c. 20. v. 10.) There are some who are naturally bent to piety, & whose conduct nevertheless is a problem. They are seen in the Church with an air of devotion & recollection that edifies; they speak of almighty God, & particularly of his love, with zeal & affection; & nevertheless this exterior, which in them is nothing but a natural propension, serves, as it were, to cover an interior full of very great faults & imperfections. These persons above all are often given to lying & deceitfulness; they easily betray themselves in those occasions that thwart their humour; they fall into dissipation or into excesses of anger, of pride, of love of creatures, or in short into other very grievous faults. We may apply to them that the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST (B. 3. c. 4. n. 3.) makes this divine Master say speaking to a devout soul. "Some

„ persons walk not sincerely before me,
 „ being led with a certain curiosity & pr
 „ desire to know my secreters & to understa
 „ the high things of God, neglecting the
 „ selves & their own salvation. These o
 „ fall into great temptations & sins thro
 „ their pride & curiosity, because I sta
 „ against them. „

XV.

These different defects in the practice of piety proceed from three causes. Either from making a system of devotion after our own fancies & according to our natural inclinations; or from placing the Essential of devotion where it is not; or from having our mind to follow our passions & self love. At the same time we would practise devotion. Let us here with an excellent Author of spiritual life (Spiritual works of F. Rigole Treatise 7.) distinguish three different ways in which we may walk. That of sin. That of nature, & that of grace. We must not content ourselves with shunning the first, we must also avoid the second, & only walk in the third, following in all things the Spirit of JESUS-CHRIST. If we do this, we shall practise true devotion. But we must not flatter ourselves to do it without fighting against our passions & vicious natural inclinations; & if we will follow them, we shall have but a feeble wavering virtue liable to a thousand illusions. “ If we place „ says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST (B. 1. c. 1. n. 4.) “ our progress in Religion only in these outward observances, our devotion will quickly be at an end. „ And again (B.

9. n. 4.) he says, " a man's true progress consists in denying himself, & the man that has renounced himself is very much at liberty & very safe. „

XVI.

It is not required that a Religious who endeavours to arrive at perfection should undertake any thing extraordinary. It is required only that she keeps her Vows & observes her Rule ; that she faithfully performs the ordinary exercises of piety ; that she does all her actions, even the most indifferent ones, in view to please almighty God ; that she animates them with his holy love, & by this she will become perfect. All consists in being faithful in her duties & in fulfilling them with a spirit of devotion : this, as may be seen, is the matter & form of the perfection of a Religious. She goes to prayer, to the table, to recreation, to the work assigned her ; this is the matter of her perfection. She does all these things with piety, she animates her actions with the motives of virtue, she does all thro' love, & for the love of God ; this is the form of her perfection.

XVII.

The fervent & zealous Religious in Communities, are not always to be distinguished from those who are remiss & relaxed, by their different exercises ; since they all assist at the Mass, at prayers, at the examen of conscience ; all have their employs or manual occupations ; all go to the Workhouse ; to the refectory, to recreation. But the manner in which the one & the other behave themself.

ves in these exercises makes the difference
 because the zealous performs them with
 piety, & the relaxed without devotion. Examine
 mine narrowly a Religious who has her spiri-
 tual progress truly at heart, & another who
 takes no care of her soul; follow the one
 the other in their daily exercises. She that is
 fervent, no sooner wakes in the morning
 but she elevates her heart to God, she shakes
 off all laziness, gets up with diligence to be-
 gin the day holily, & offers the first fruit
 of it to God by her fidelity. But the relaxed
 Religious only opens her eyes to the light of
 day to reassume her tepidity & dissipation
 which sleep had interrupted. Her first thoughts
 are perhaps of those, she expects to come
 to see her at the Grate in the day time,
 of some other idle fancy that passes in her
 mind; so far from getting up readily, as the
 Rule ordains, she only listens to her sluggish
 & drowsy disposition, & always fears to get
 out of bed too soon. The zealous Religious
 goes to morning prayer as soon as ever she
 hears the bell ring, & that with a recollected
 mind, with a heart disposed to perform
 well & as it ought, & with a sincere desire
 of profiting by it. The relaxed goes with
 reluctance, with dissipation, & so far from
 thinking to make a good use of so precious
 an exercise for the saving her soul, she is
 totally taken up with trifles, she is tired
 being at it; & perhaps thro' disgust, or
 little care she has to think of God, she falls
 asleep in the time of it. The fervent Religious
 goes from mental prayer to the office
 with a new pleasure. Her behaviour at it

st edifying, grave, modest & pious. The
 axed on the contrary is as weary at the
 ce as she was at meditation; she recites
 with the same dissipation & the same dis-
 t; she sighs after nothing but the end of
 yer, & is never more satisfied than when
 s over. The zealous Religious acquits her-
 of her employ & work as exactly as pos-
 e she can, & in view to please almighty
 d: she works without being in a hurry, &
 with address & diligence; with meekness
 peace, never murmuring, nor with unquiet-
 s, but with recollection & attention to
 presence of God; & never with a dissipa-
 distracted mind. While the relaxed falls
 o, as I may say, a thousand faults in an
 ur, in her work & employ. Sometimes she
 glects it, sometimes she does it in a hurry
 with dissipation of thought that entirely
 tracts her; sometimes in doing it she aban-
 ns herself to impatience, to anxiety; she
 lows her own caprice, her own humour
 self-love, & never does any thing in view
 accomplishing & complying with the Will
 God. If the fervent Religious is with her
 ters, she practises all sweetness, patience,
 arity & goodness. Is the relaxed with them?
 is often to find fault with them, and to
 und common charity. When the fervent
 Religious has finished her work, she retires
 her Cell, as to her Center, there to re-
 lect herself more particularly, & to taste
 e sweets & advantages of retirement; but
 e relaxed seeks nothing but to run about
 e Monastery, to talk, to inform herself
 of curiosity of all that passes, to lose time

herself & make the others do so likewise. How great is the submission of a fervent Religious when her Superior speaks to her & with what promptitude does she obey her. The relax'd eludes as much as she can the orders, she only complies with them by force, she complains, she murmurs & will never follow but her own Will. Behold the fervent Religious in the Chapter, in the Refectory, & in other Acts of Community her recollection, her modesty, her regular behaviour, her meekness, her piety. The relaxed is quite different, her eyes are everywhere staring about; her air dissipated; she has always some tittle tattle at hand, for a bad example to give. When the zealous Religious is with the others at recreation she diverts herself with an innocent mirth, never at the expence of a religious sobriety & modesty; the relaxed is a stranger to both she makes the whole Monastery echo with her noise, with her transports of joy, with her fits of laughter. She blabs out every thing she ought to keep secret; she lets loose the reins to her dissipated mind; & she is only known by her veil & habit to be a Religious.

XVIII.

It is then by practising with piety the duties & exercises of Religion that the zealous Religious advances in the way of perfection. In doing well what she commonly does the she distinguishes herself from the relaxed Religious, & that she sanctifies herself without being obliged to make herself particular to the Community, by undertaking extraordinary

ings. On the contrary, it is in ill doing the same exercises, & in committing many faults in performing them, that the relaxed Religious is opposite to the zealous one; & takes as much out of the way of perfection, as the other advances in it, & in a spiritual sense. You therefore who have renounced to the pleasures of the world, who have shut yourself up in a Cloister, who have voluntarily submitted yourself to obedience & to the other religious Vows; you, I say, who have taken all these steps so contrary to the inclinations of nature, & who thereby have advanced so far towards arriving at perfection, how come you to stop in so charming a road, by not doing with a spirit of piety whatever you do? May not the same reproach which S. Paul made to the Galatians [C. 3. v. 1.] be addressed to you : *Who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth.* Why do you thus stop in the middle of your course, & wonder by your sloth what you have hitherto done of no use? Having renounced the world, you have nought to do but to acquit yourself piously of all that you do in Religion; it is in this precisely that you stop short. A little more fervour and courage would suffice to perfect the work of your sanctification, & you refuse it. Was not your religious behaviour a proof of it, I should scarce believe it.

XIX.

The exercises of piety are prescribed to a Religious either by her Rule, or by the customs of her Monastery, or by the prudent advice of her Director. Her exactness in per-

forming them as she ought, will draw down on her great graces. But if she is negligent in them, she will insensibly fall into a state of remissness, lukewarmness & indevotion.

XX.

A Religious ought to mind three things in her exercises. 1. To do them faithfully. 2. To do them piously. 3. To gather all the fruit from them in her power. These three points expressed in few words contain so great a meaning & so large a practice, that they may serve for a subject of Meditation & Examen for years together.

XXI.

To perform all our exercises to day & lay them aside to morrow; to reassume them the day after & quit them again the day following, is to build & demolish successively. What possibility is there in thus acting, & bringing the work of our perfection happily to an end! Such a behaviour indicates a levity of mind, a piety more capricious than solid & a soul altogether inconstant in good.

XXII.

The same must be said of a Religious that always comes late to Acts of Community that goes to them with disgust, through humbleness of respect & by force; that performs them through custom & because she must do them, without carrying her intention any farther. She ought not to flatter herself with the hopes of the heavenly blessings which God reserves for the regular & fervent.

XXIII.

This fervour & this diligence is a sure means of knowing the zeal a Religious has

RELIGIOUS. 93

her advancement. It is the most certain proof she can give to God of her love; to the Monastery of her regularity, & to her soul of the true care she has of it. Such Religious will go from virtue to virtue. But the negligent will daily decline from the direct road that brings us to life everlasting.

XXIV.

This negligence generally speaking is the effect of our remissness in the practice of God. As we have not the same relish for the exercises of piety, as we had before, we go with pain to the exercises of piety, & are soon weary of them. Hence we are easily inclined to dispute with ourselves; or if we dare not do so, we shorten them, we always cut of one part, & perform the other with tepidity, distraction of mind & indevotion of heart. In a word, our fervour not being nourished by these salutary exercises, & from which we receive no benefit, because we perform them indifferently; instead of going on in piety & growing in virtue, we degenerate to such a degree that from tepidity we fall into indifferency, from indifferency into an unhappy insensibility that makes us at length abandon all care of our souls.

XXV.

To be exact in all our exercises is not sufficient, we must also acquit ourselves of them with devotion. The same fidelity that hinders our being absent from them, ought to accompany us in a pious & devout performance of them. It is a cunning craftiness of the devil, when he cannot engage us to omit our exercises, to hinder us at least from

doing them as we ought ; & if he succeeds it, he has gained his point. For in reality what can be thought of a Religious who values herself upon being always the first in Meditation , or at the Office , & who at the same time does not endeavour to be attentive at them , or to perform them with devotion ? May she not be reproached with having shewed a diligence in coming to them only to offer to almighty God the distractions of a dissipated mind , & of a heart without love.

XXVI.

The spirit of piety which we here require of a Religious , in the practice of her exercises , consists in three things. 1. In going to them with a sincere resolution of getting some benefit to her soul. 2. In performing them with attention & devotion. 3. In not to come from them but with a recollected mind , & a heart penetrated with good sentiments. Thus a Religious who has her spiritual progress at heart, does not content herself with being exact & punctual at every Act of Community , as at the office , at spiritual reading , at the examen of conscience & the rest ; this is only an outward mark of her fidelity & of her fervour ; but moreover she frequents them fully resolved to acquire herself of them the best she is able , & with an intention to find in them , either new force & strength against temptations , & the conflicts against herself ; or a new fervour to grow in virtue & perfection , or an increase of love to unite herself more closely to our Lord JESUS-CHRIST. The manner

acquits herself of them perfectly corresponds to this pious intention ; it is with all recollection of her mind ; with all the motion of her heart ; with an affectionate pouring out her soul towards God: In short when she comes from them , the piety , in which she performed them , shews it by her recollected air , as well as the increase of devotion she therein acquired.

XXVII.

We very often propose to ourselves some particular practices of piety , which we perform as we acquit ourselves of with greater relish & fervour than of the common exercises of the Rule. I do not pretend to condemn this ; I fear nevertheless that self love may have a great share in it. This suspicion seems much the better grounded , that a person very fervent & zealous , who has the spirit of God , is more inclined to be diffident of his own proper lights , & of his own choice , than in exercises of piety ; & always prefers that is of the common observance to particular practices. The Author of the Imitation of JESUS - CHRIST who was very well versed in a spiritual life , intended without doubt to teach us this truth when he said (1. c. 19. n. 5.) " Take care thou be not backward in common exercises & more forward in things of thy own particular devotion. ,, Be therefore careful to perform these particular exercises ; but be not less so of those of the Community. Always give the preference to these before the others , when thou cannot comply with both ; & when you cannot , do not shew a greater liking for those

of your choice, which would betray a subtle device of self love.

XXVIII.

As to these particular exercises we may deceive ourselves three different ways. The first, when we have a greater esteem for them than for the common ones of the Monastery, or rely more upon them for our spiritual advancement. A Religious acquits herself negligently of the practices of her Rule; she does not take the care she ought to recite or sing the divine office well; to make her meditation; she keeps no guard over her senses; she is negligent in the exercise of the presence of God; she profits of no occasion which providence puts into her hands to practise any act of humility, of charity, of mortification or of patience; & this Religious asks her Director to prescribe some exercises or particular practices to help her to correct her faults, or to advance in virtue. If she is asked why she will do these acts of supererogation, whilst she only acquits herself perfunctorily of those which are of obligation; why she desires supernumerary means when she does not reap any benefit by those the Rule furnishes her with. It seems, we rightly understand her, that she does not hope to receive any benefit from them, because they are common & she is obliged to make use of them; & that only those practices, which are in her own choice to do or not to do can be of service to her, & efficaciously help her. This proceeds from our being less touched at what is ordinary because we are accustomed to it; whereas

that is new, strikes us more; or from our preferring what is of our own free choice to that which is of obligation. Nevertheless it is an illusion. Begin by doing well what your rule prescribes, make a good use of the exercises it ordains; & when you have made the best of this lesson, it will be time enough to give you another.

XXIX.

The second way we may deceive ourselves is, when we take upon us a great number of practices so as to be almost ready to sink under the burden. Hence it happens that we do no one in particular well, because we have too many to do; or that insensibly we take a disgust to them by the constraint we are under; & at length are obliged to leave them off, or change them for others, which, becoming no less tedious to us than the former, we equally abandon. We are even sometimes so taken up with these different & numerous practices, that our thoughts are more bent upon fulfilling them than upon acquiring religious virtues; & this is a reason why so many remain in their faults, whilst instead of working at their own amendment, they turn all their attention & industry to set themselves a quantity of exercises of devotion, which costs them less trouble to practise than it would to fight against their passions, & to use an Evangelical violence against themselves.

XXX.

The third way to fall into an illusion, is to attach ourselves so strongly to the exercises we propose to perform, as to suffer in mind,

& give ourselves up to trouble & anxiety when we can not fulfil them at our Will & pleasure. A Religious, for example, has imposed upon herself an obligation of saying the Rosary every saturday : a thing very commendable & praise worthy. But it may happen the Superior has appointed her that day to help & assist another Sister, & thereupon she is disturbed in mind, she is cast down & obeys with regret, because she won't have time to recite it. Who does not easily perceive the illusion? For in reality what do you pretend by this practice of piety, otherwise very holy & very beneficial; is it to please almighty God, or not? If it is the Will of God that you should leave it, to do what your Superior commands you, what reason have you to vex & trouble yourself?

XXXI.

We should think quite otherwise, & you would be truly blameable if you omitted your exercises thro' any disgust, thro' a want of fervour, thro' caprice & to spare yourself the pains; we should on the contrary exhort you to be punctual in the performance of them; we should reproach you with your inconstancy & laziness. But as it behoves you to be exact in your practices, when you can perform them, in order to sustain yourself & make a progress; so does it equally behove you to let them alone when obedience or charity require it. " If for piety's sake," says the Author of the Imitation of Jesus CHRIST, (B. 1. c. 19. n. 3.) or with design of the profit of our Brother, sometimes omit our accustomed exercises

RELIGIOUS. 99

it may afterwards be easily recovered; but if thro' a loathing of mind, or negligence, it be lightly let alone, it is no small fault, & will prove hurtful.,

XXXII.

In your particular exercises therefore observe the following Rules. 1. Not to undertake any one of consequence of your own head, but always with the advice of your Superior, Confessor, or Director. 2. Always to prefer those your Rule ordains, to those you impose upon yourself. 3. Not to multiply these practices of devotion, so as to take up more time than you can well spare to fulfil your ordinary obligations with ease & peace of mind. 4. Not to embrace any that you know is contrary to the Will of your Superior, or incompatible with the office you are in. 5. To avoid all those that may be too apparent to the eyes of the Community & under you any ways particular. 6. To perform them faithfully & punctually, but not to tie yourself to them with such a scrupulosity & affectation as to be vexed & fretted to omit them, when charity, obedience, or discretion requires it of you. In following these Rules you will perform such exercises as you ought, & to the profit of your soul; but if you depart from them you run the risk of hazard of falling into errors & illusions.

XXXIII.

A Religious ought to look upon her Rule as a declaration of the Will of God in her regard, & as the sure way that will infallibly conduct her to Heaven, if she faithfully serves it. Such is the Idea she ought to

100 THE PERFECT

frame of it ; such the account she ought to make of it ; & such the esteem & value she ought to have for it. Hence it follows that a Religious who does not observe her Rule acts contrary to the Will of God , & departs from the way his divine Will has traced out for her to walk in. Reflect on this as often as you are tempted to transgress it , perhaps this reflection may serve to strengthen you against the temptation.

XXXIV.

You ought not to authorize yourself, to plead the example of others to prevaricate against the Rule , nor to have any regard to human respects. They are the two ordinary snares the devil lays for those Religious who in relaxed Monasteries have a mind to become regular , & do not effectually do it. They let themselves be drawn away by the example of those who are imperfect : or the fear of being banter'd & laugh'd at , or of suffering biting reproach , retains them in their slothfulness.

XXXV.

How guilty & culpable are those Religious who by bad example excite their Sisters to neglect regular observance , when they have a mind to live up to it ; or expressly divert them from it by their railleries , banterings & criticisms. They thereby charge their conscience with the ruin of regularity ; & if those who come after them are not more exact God will impute it to them , as having been the first & chief cause of it.

XXXVI.

You who live in a Monastery where

meet with such obstacles to the good Will
 mighty God inspires you with to be regu-
 lar; overcome them courageously. Shut your
 eyes to the conduct of those who are relaxed
 & remiss; let not their example make any
 impression upon your heart. You will be judg-
 ed, not by what they have done, but by
 the Rule you profess. If you meet any con-
 tradiction from them, let not that stop you.
 Bear with meekness & patience whatever
 they may say against you, & remain firmly
 attached to regular observance. Their con-
 tradictions will pass, & your fidelity will be
 crowned. They will be tired of attacking
 you, & you will have the merit in the sight
 of God to have triumphed over human resis-
 tance. Perhaps even those who put your pa-
 tience to a trial will be ashamed to have
 done it, seeing themselves condemned by your
 fidelity, & confounded by your patience; &
 who knows but your constancy & good exam-
 ple may be as powerfull means to touch
 their hearts, & bring them back to their
 duty, as their efforts to draw you from yours
 were vain & fruitless.

XXXVII.

Whether you are old or young nothing
 excuses you from your Rule, but in-
 capacity of observing it thro' old age, or in-
 firmity. The more the Ancients are grown
 old in Religion, the more they ought to
 have grown in a faithful observance of re-
 gularity; & if it is not so, they may be
 justly asked in what they have spent their ti-
 me. The Young ought with no less care to
 apply themselves to be exact. They must

from the beginning attach themselves to the practice of the least duties, in order to contract such a habit, which our natural weakness that insensibly inclines us to a remission, can never break or destroy. As the hopes of Religion for the time to come are grounded upon the young Religious, the more they are brought up in a faithful observance of the Rule, the more, we may be sure, regularity will be kept up in the Monastery.

XXXVIII.

To be deficient in the observance of the Rules, because they are not obligatory under sin, would be a most frivolous pretence or excuse. Is it sufficient for a Religious to offend almighty God? Ought she to go any further to endeavour to please him? What progress can she promise herself to make towards the perfection of her state, if she is unfaithful in the observance of that, which is so powerful a means to become perfect? When a Religious habitually transgresses her Rule, it is a proof she has but little esteem for it; it is also a proof she neither performs her prayer, nor other practices of piety as she ought. And I add that it is also a proof she profits little or nothing by the Sacraments. Give me a Religious that goes to communion with true devotion; the presence of JESUS-CHRIST in her, will inspire her to make frequent protestations to him of being more & more faithful, & these protestations will particularly regard her fidelity & exactness in observing her Rule. Give me a Religious that performs her prayer well, she will soon reproach herself with the breaches of her

Rule, if she has been guilty of any ; & this reproach will make her take a firm resolution to be more regular. The good use then of prayer & communion leads to regular observance, & when we habitually neglect this observance, we may reproach ourselves with the little profit of our prayers & of our communions.

XXXIX.

It is much to be feared least an habitual breaking of the Rule should breed a formal contempt thereof. Now this contempt is no small sin. I do not design to raise here scruples unadvisedly ; but you who so little regard the breaking of your Rule, tell us what account you make of it? What esteem you have for it? It is true you do not precisely transgress it to condemn it; which would be a formal contempt; but how much is it to be feared that by often transgressing, you fall interiorly into a formal contempt, & that according to the remark of the great Saint Francis of Sales (Disc. 1.) you take the liberty, & are so bold as to say with the wicked mentioned by David : *Who is our Lord.*

XL.

As this is an essential matter & of a nice decision, it will not be amiss to borrow the words of the holy Bishop just now cited, without changing any thing in his expressions, for fear of diminishing their energy & unobscured by the weakness of our own. " The contempt, says He, of constitutions, as also of all other good works, is known by the following considerations. He falls into it who thro' contempt violates or

104 THE PERFECT

„ omits to fulfil any ordinance , not
 „ voluntarily , but on purpose : for if
 „ violates it thro' inadvertence , forget-
 „ nels or surprise of some passion , it's an-
 „ other thing ; for contempt contains in it
 „ a deliberate Act of the Will , & which
 „ expressly determines it self to what it does
 „ Hence it follows that he who breaks a law
 „ or disobeys thro' contempt , does not only
 „ disobey , but is determined to disobey
 „ Not only commits a disobedience , but
 „ commits it with an intention of disobeying
 „ It is forbid to eat betwixt meals. A Nun
 „ eats plums , apricocks , & other fruit ; she
 „ transgresses her Rule , & commits an act of
 „ disobedience. But if she eats attracted by
 „ the delectation she thinks to have , she
 „ then disobeys , not thro' disobedience , but
 „ thro' daintiness. Or else she eats because
 „ she esteems not the Rule , & will make
 „ no account of it , nor submit herself to it
 „ & then she disobeys thro' contempt &
 „ disobedience. It also follows that he who
 „ disobeys thro' some allurements , or sur-
 „ prised by passion , would willingly be able
 „ to content his passion without disobeying
 „ & at the same time that he has a plea-
 „ sure , for example , in eating , is forbidden
 „ that it is thro' disobedience. In which case
 „ the disobedience follows or accompanies
 „ the act ; but in the other the disobedience
 „ precedes the act , & is a cause or motive
 „ of it , altho' thro' daintiness ; for he who
 „ eats against the precept , either conse-
 „ quently or concomitantly commits an act
 „ of disobedience , tho' if he could avoid it

in eating, he would not commit it. But he who eats thro' a contempt of the Rule, & thro' disobedience, wills the disobedience it self, so that he would not do the action, nor have a mind to do it, unless he was excited & moved to do it by the Will he has to disobey. The one therefore disobeys in doing a thing to which disobedience is annexed; & the other disobeys in doing the same thing because disobedience is attached or annexed.,,

XLI.

Such is the means this great Saint gives to know in what consists, what is called a formal contempt of the Rule; & here are the signs he gives for us to be able to judge in practice whether, when we miss, we have done with a formal contempt or not. "But that," says he, one may in some measure discern when a person transgresses the Rules or obedience by contempt, here are some signs. 1. When being corrected she laughs & scoffs & has no repentance. 2. When she perseveres without shewing any Will or desire of amendment. 3. When she pretends & maintains the Rule or Precept is not to the purpose. 4. When she endeavours to draw others to commit the same transgressions, & to take from them the fear thereof, telling them it is nothing, there is no danger. These signs notwithstanding are not so certain but that sometimes they happen from other causes than from that of contempt; for it may happen that a person laughs at, & ridicules him who corrects her, thro' the little esteem

„ she has for him ; that she perseveres thro’
 „ weakness & infirmity ; that she disposes
 „ thro’ vexation & anger ; & that she
 „ bauchses others to have companions to
 „ cuse her faults. Nevertheless it is easily
 „ judge by the circumstances when all
 „ is done thro’ contempt. „

XLII.

Let us now see what a sin this formal contempt of the Rules is , & let us continue to
 harken to the same Saint. “ Now , He says
 „ this formal disobedience (to the Rules
 „ & this contempt of good & holy things
 „ never without some sin , at the least veni-
 „ nial ; [note well those words] not even
 „ those things which are only of counsel
 „ for altho’ we may not follow the counsels
 „ fels of holy things , by the choice of other
 „ things , without any offence ; yet we can-
 „ not omit them thro’ contempt without
 „ offence ; for tho’ all Good does not oblige
 „ us to follow it , yet it does to honour
 „ esteem it ; & by consequence , with great
 „ reason , not to contemn and despise it .
 „ Moreover it follows that he who breaks
 „ his Rule & Constitutions thro’ contempt
 „ looks upon it as vile & useless , which
 „ a very great presumption ; or if he looks
 „ upon it as useful , & yet will not submit
 „ himself to it , he then breaks his design
 „ with a great prejudice to his neighbour , to
 „ whom he gives scandal & bad example .
 „ he acts contrary to society & the promise
 „ he made to the Community , & puts
 „ holy devout house into disorder , which
 „ are very great faults. „

All is great, all is precious, all is worthy
attention, all is of consequence in the
Rules. There is nothing little, nothing useless.
You are not permitted to have a regard for one
thing, & make no account of another; to
be exact in observing this because it incom-
modes us less, & to omit fulfilling that be-
cause it puts a constraint upon our liberty.
The little Rules keep up the great, & the
great ought to diminish in nothing our esteem
for the little ones deserve: or rather there
is nothing little in the Rules, because they
flow from the same principle, which is
the Spirit of God. All are given for the per-
fection of souls, & upholding of Communi-
ty; they are all linked together & have a
mutual correspondence, by which they sub-
stantially support each other: Just as the parts of
a human body are dependant of one ano-
ther, in which if one is hurt, the others also
suffer. Say not therefore what harm is it to
sleep so much in the Dormitory, where the
Rule commands silence? What harm to stay
without necessity in the Chamber of a Sister,
against the obedience you owe to your Ru-
les? It ought to suffice you that the Rule
commands one, & forbids the other, for you
are absolutely to conform to it. If every one in
the Religion thought she had a right to follow
the Rule only in what is pleasing, & to
transgress it in what is troublesome, what
order, what confusion, what disturbance!
Regularity would only hold by the caprice
& fancy of particulars. This who is to day
gay & in good humour would go to recrea-

tion, & another that is melancholy & would absent herself from it without permission. This who has a good appetite would eat out of meals, & that who has no appetite would not take any thing; tho' the Superior should order it. The one would observe that which pleases her, & the other would omit it because it does not suit her. In this case there is no Monastery in which regular discipline could maintain it self a month together.

XLIV.

We shall advance nothing contrary to the precedent maxim, in observing here that there are certain points of the Rule so essential that you cannot accustom yourself to transgress them without doing a great prejudice to the regularity of the Monastery; & causing a formal disturbance. Such is silence either as to time, or places. A Monastery where the Religious make no difficulty of talking in the Dormitory, or in the Refectory contrary to the order of the Rule; a Monastery where they do not keep the great silence prescribed by the Rule, either in the afternoon, or at night after prayer, till the next day; this Monastery I say, may be numbered among the relaxed ones, when the violation of silence is become general & ordinary. On the contrary we may look upon a Monastery as regular, & with reason, when silence is exactly observed; because it is a proof that the Religious are interior & recollected; the virtue of silence being, as it were, the Nurse of recollection, & of the spirit of prayer. It is the same of certain

her points of the Rule that concur, & more nearly help to the practice of religious virtues. These virtues cease to be practised when they are not kept up by the observance of these Rules, which serve them for support; & hence we may perceive how great a breach we make in regularity & religious perfection by neglecting these Rules.

XLV.

We must distinguish in the Rule the Letter, & the Spirit or intention of it. That is to say, what it ordains, & the end for which it ordains it. The observance of the Letter is something, but it ought not to content a Religious who is desirous to advance in perfection. For example, when the Rule prescribes silence to be kept in the Dormitory, it is that the Religious who are in their cells, & are supposed to be there in recollection, either working, reading or meditating may not be disturbed by any noise. Hence it follows that we not only transgress against the precept of silence by speaking & making, but also by making too great a noise walking, running, or stamping; & by consequence we sin as much against the Rule if we spoke, because this noise does not interrupt & disturb the retirement of the Sisters in their Chambers, than if we were to talk aloud. Moreover there is a hidden intention under the letter of the Rule, which duty ought to make us study to conform ourselves to. So when it ordains silence, it is not precisely, or only that we should not speak, but that by exercising ourselves in the virtue of silence we might more easily acquire

110 THE PERFECT

the Spirit of recollection, so necessary for keep & advance us in piety. Saint Anthony said to his Disciple Saint Paul the Simple when you are commanded to hold your tongue, do it not only to keep silence, but that you are unworthy to speak.

XLVI.

How rich in merit & how agreeable in the eyes of God is a Religious exact in the observance of her Rule! Represent to yourself this happy & zealous person, who from morning till night lives in a continual dependence on her Rule; who voluntarily submits herself to it for the love of JESUS-CHRIST who is not only attentive to observe every point of it most punctually, but who does it with devotion, & with an intention of fulfilling the Will of JESUS-CHRIST, which is made known to her every moment by that her Rule prescribes; who in a word squares all her proceedings, all her steps, all her actions, all her intentions by her Rule. What Idea have you of her virtue? What merit think you she acquires in the sight of God? How do you imagine God looks upon her? How happy do you think with yourself she will die, after so constant a fidelity, & what will be received by her heavenly Spouse in the next world? Do you not find this Religious most praise-worthy: do you not esteem her most happy? And do you not acknowledge that Heaven is her Due? But what hinders then your partaking of so great advantages? Do as she does, & you will share them with her.

Besides what the Rule ordains, there are in many Monasteries certain pious Customs established by a long practice, or by a sort of tradition, which may justly be presumed to come from the beginning of the Institution, because the time of their being first introduced can't be found out. These Customs are generally instituted for the better observance of the Rule, & serve as a rampart to regular discipline. As long as they are adhered to, regularity without doubt will be kept up, but it runs a great hazard to be weakened, if these Customs are destroyed. The devil more cunning & fuller of wiles & deceit than one man express, commonly begins afar off to undermine regular observance in Monasteries: He does not immediately suggest any essential breaches, but only those that seem to be of little consequence, & in which scarce any harm is perceived; & by this artifice he more securely advances his work of darkness. When the Customs destroyed, the Rules, as it were, lay open to his assaults. He soon makes large Breaches, & at length renders himself entirely Master of the place, by the violations of the vows, which are essential to religion. We then open our eyes, but by a late experience, find too late of what a consequence it was, not to let those pious Customs be broke into.

XLVIII.

It may here be asked what it is, for a Religious to have the Spirit of her vocation. To understand it rightly, we must distinguish between the general Spirit of a religious state,

112 THE PERFECT

& the particular Spirit of each Order. The general is to tend to the perfection of charity; the particular is the way & means which each Institute tends & aspires to the perfection of charity. " That is to say ,
 „ the great Saint Francis of Sales observes
 „ (Tom. 2. Disc. 3;) to the union of
 „ souls with God , & with our neighbour
 „ the love of God. With God , it is by the
 „ union of our Will to his ; & with our
 „ neighbour , by meekness , which is a virtue
 „ immediately proceeding from charity. Now
 „ the particular Spirit is different in different
 „ Orders. Some , says the Saint , unite themselves
 „ to God & to their neighbour by contemplation ,
 „ & for that live in a very great
 „ retirement , & converse the least they can
 „ with the world , nor even with one another
 „ unless at certain times. They also unite
 „ themselves to their neighbour by means of
 „ prayer , in offering up their prayers for
 „ God for him. On the contrary the particular
 „ Spirit of others is to unite themselves
 „ to God & their neighbour by the means
 „ of an active life , tho' spiritual , uniting
 „ themselves to God by mental prayer ;
 „ nevertheless their principal end is to endeavour
 „ to convert souls & unite them to
 „ God. Some embrace a severe & rigid way
 „ with a perfect contempt of the world , & of
 „ all it's vanities , & sensualities , desiring
 „ by their example to induce men to the
 „ same contempt of earthly things ; & by
 „ this the roughness of their dress or habit
 „ and other exercises contribute. Others have
 „ another Spirit ; & it is very necessary

To know what is the Spirit of each religious Order & pious assembly. „ Thus according to the observation of Saint Francis of Sales, which is also that of all other Masters of a spiritual life , the particular Spirit of each religious institution , or pious assembly , is nothing else but the principal end & particular means by which the respective members tend to the general perfection , that consists in an union with God & our neighbour by charity.

XLIX.

Every Religious can by the foregoing observations comprehend what is the Spirit of her State , & ought to endeavour to acquire it for the grace of the vocation she received as given to her first to aspire to perfection , then calling her to Religion ; & secondly to persevere to this perfection , by such or such principal & particular means , in calling her to such or such an Order or particular institution. A Carthusian Nun , for example , or a Carmelite is called in quality of a Religious to perfection ; but as a Carthusian or Carmelite she ought to tend to it by a Spirit of retreat & solitude , by prayer , silence , & holy recollection. A Capucine or Recollectine is called to perfection , as well as the Carthusian or Carmelite ; but as a Capucine or Recollectine , she ought to tend to it by the rigorous practice of Evangelical poverty. An Ursuline or a Hospital Nun ought , as Religious , to aspire to perfection ; the one ought to tend to it by charity towards her neighbour , educating & bringing up Children ; & the other in serving the poor Sick & Infirm.

114 THE PERFECT L.

A Religious is sure to follow the Spirit of her State, when she is exact in the observance of her Rule & Constitutions : & this is sufficient to sanctify her , that she needs no other proof to assure herself of her holiness than that of her fidelity in observing her Rule. A Truth truly comfortable , & which ought to excite continual sentiments of a most lively acknowledgement towards God, in the hearts of all those he has called to Religion. What can they desire more to assure themselves of their sanctification, than to be certain to effect it by being faithful to their Rule ? In the world we often do things without knowing whether they are in order, & according to the Will of God ; but a Religious in observing her Rule has nothing to fear on that side : she is sure that every point is an action that God wills her to do , & that leads to her sanctification. Let then every Religious keep herself faithful to the observance of her Rule : let her entirely set herself to it. I exact nothing else from her ; & I can promise her in the name of God , with all the Saints , with all the Doctors , with all the Masters of a spiritual life , with the whole Church , that she will be a true Saint ; that her life will be full of merits , & her death precious in the sight of God.

LI.

A Religious ought to look upon her vows as the apple of her eye ; that is to say , she ought to guard them with all possible care & attention & circumspection. If she sincerely loves God , & is desirous to please him more

& more, it will not be enough to keep them in what is most Essential, & against which she cannot transgress without committing a mortal sin; she must also aim at keeping them in the most perfect manner; & without ceasing, generously endeavour to imitate therein the practice & example of the Saints. Let her not then say, I can transgress my vow to such a degree without sinning mortally, & that is enough for me; a disposition so little regular would soon betray her bad heart & culpable aversion to the perfection of her State, & would expose her to an imminent danger of violating her vows in matter of weight. Religious that without scruple disposes of little things against the Rules of poverty she has vowed; & that accustoms herself to these small breaches, has no more fear or horror at for great faults; but by degrees she will familiarize herself with these, & become as insensible to them, as she was & is to the others.

LII.

O how blind would a Religious be, if ever she had an after-regret for having made her vows! How often rather ought she not to renew them in her heart, & render thanks to her heavenly Spouse, who has tied her to himself by these amiable & honourable bands. Happy chains, happy servitude that has freed her from the slavery of the world! What more glorious could happen to her, & more advantageous, than to have enter'd into insoluble engagements with JESUS-CHRIST? Ah! if this divine Master open'd her eyes to the nothingness & emptiness of the world,

116 THE PERFECT

& the excellency of her State, how soon will this regret be changed into acts of praise & thanksgiving ! All her life , was it to last an age , would seem to her too short to express & testify to her divine Spouse her love & gratitude.

LIII.

You know the world very little , if you have any regret for having quitted it. It dazzles you with some glittering appearances , it strikes your eyes thro' the Grate ; a Dressing a Party of pleasure , which some worldly woman comes & entertains you with ; a Coach you hear rattling in the streets ; all this strikes you , & makes you believe every day is a feast , all is joy , all pleasure in the world. O how much you are mistaken ! Harken to the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST , who (B. 3. c. 12. n. 2.) paints the world as it is in nature , & gives us it's picture in it's true colours. Dost thou think , says this man of truth , this man enlightened from above , whose words are all so many Oracles , “ Dost thou think , says he , the men of this world suffer little or nothing ? Thou shalt not find it so , though thou seek out for the most delicate. But thou wilt say , they have more delights , & follow their own Wills ; & therefore make small account of their tribulations. Suppose it to be so , that they have all they desire ; how long dost thou think this will last ? Behold they shall vanish away like smokes that abound in this world , & there shall be no remembrance of their past joys. Nay even whilst they are living , they rest not in them without bitterness

arkfomness & fear. For the very same thing in which they conceive a delight, doth often bring upon them the punishment of sorrow. Tis just it should be so with them, that since they inordinately seek & follow their pleasures, they should not satisfy them without confusion & uneasiness. O how short, how deceitful, how inordinate & filthy are all these pleasures ! Yet thro' foolishness & blindness men understand this not ; but like brute beasts, for a small pleasure in this mortal life, they incur the eternal death of their souls. , Let a Religious, whom the devil tempts with a desire of the pleasures & vanities of the world, take these words for the subject of her Meditation, let her comprehend how great a grace almighty God has done her, in calling her out of a region of darkness, where the pleasures are ever without gall, where the pains are often oppressive, & unsufferable, & piety is always exposed to the snares laid under it's feet.

LIV.

Some people, & even Persons of probity are away with preventions against the holy state of Religion, under pretext that there are some, who are discontent ; and these persons on occasion will have no great scruple to persuade young persons from entering into it, & will alledge a thousand pitiful reasons, or relate a number of ridiculous stories, which nevertheless are not without making some impression on their tender minds. These people spare their judgment, not according to the spirit of the Saints, nor maxims of the Gospel, nor even according to experience ; but by

118 THE PERFECT

some examples, which are of no consequence, & of which they cannot prevail themselves in their decision, without going counter to the rules of piety, of truth, & of good sense. We grant them, that there are some Religious not content in their State, & who repent having made their vows; & groan, if they have it so, under the weight of their engagements, as under a hard state of bondage & slavery. But who are these Religious? They are precisely those, who take a dislike to the service of God, & only grow weary of the State, because, for their misfortune, they have taken a liking to the world. A Religious has contracted a strict friendship with some worldly Dame, or some young Cavalier, who often, & almost daily, comes to the Grate, & entertains her with the pleasures, the feast, the honours of the world: She listens to the discourses, she relishes them, & thus grows tired & disgusted with her condition. But find a good Religious addicted to the observance of her Rule, to the practice of virtues, to please God with her whole heart, find, I say, a good Religious, that complies with her obligations, & has at the same time such a dislike to her state. She may, if you will, have some flying temptations thereon, as upon other things; but if you fathom her sentiments, even in time of temptation, which she suffers against her Will, you will find her penetrated with esteem & affection for her State, & always ready to renew her engagements, & to render thanks to God for the vocation he inspired her with. And if we let ourselves be prejudiced against a religious

que
an
inter
d
relig
ent
ney
eng
lage
The
to
of the
, the
relig
h
valie
Gr
e fe
to the
aus
nditi
to
Cice
he
om
ne
if
ere
om
ation
rou
fecti
new
God
d if
relig

e, on account of those who are discontent
, & who are only so thro' the bad prin-
ciple of the love of the world; we ought to
be so likewise against all states of life, since
in whatever State we are, we can not be con-
tently & happy, if we do not fulfil the obligations
of it, & if we estrange ourselves from it.

LV.

There is a Custom piously established in some
Monasteries to renew their vows at certain
times, or certain great Festivals. The Reli-
gious ought to prepare themselves before
such days by a more than ordinary recollection
of some days. They ought to perform this holy
ceremony with a particular fervour and devo-
tion, & with as much pleasure & interior joy,
as if it was for the first time. Their thank-
sgivings ought to be the most lively, & their
affection the most tender, considering the
estimable grace almighty God favoured
them with, in separating them from a corrupt
world; & securing them against the dangers
of it, by calling them to Religion. Let them
at that time excite themselves to be faithful
to their promises, & let them renew their
resolution of consecrating themselves
without reserve to the service & love of their
Spouse our Lord JESUS-CHRIST.

LVI.

The Anniversary of their profession ought
to be to all Religious a holy-day, a day of
commemoration, of joy, & of triumph. It is in
these pious sentiments they ought to keep it;
in this keeping of it ought to be more inte-
rior than exterior; more secret under the eyes
of JESUS-CHRIST, & of his Angels, than ex-

pressed by the transports of a dissipated mind. They ought to spend it in retirement, & call to their remembrance, & repass in their minds the benefits of almighty God to them. They may take for the subject of their meditation, the grace he conferred upon them, calling them in a special manner to his service, by the vocation he inspired them with, all the favours they have received in Religion as a sequel of the first; the excellency of the State, & the honour that redounds to them from their sacred alliance; to what obligations, & to how great an acknowledgment a signal favour engages them. They may examine themselves upon the use they have made of so many means of sanctifying themselves upon the manner they have acquitted themselves of their duties, & upon the fidelity with which they have corresponded to the designs of perfection, which almighty God has upon them. A Religious ought not to content herself with renewing her vows on the days we have just mentioned, she ought also to do it in her thanksgiving after she has had the happiness of going to communion, dedicating & giving herself entirely to her divine Saviour, as he gives himself entirely to her in this Sacrament of life; she ought to esteem it a subject of joy & marvelous delight not only to have given herself to him irrevocably by her profession, but also that it is in her power to ratify her consecration at the feet of this God incarnate, & in the very moment she possesses him within her breast. Ah! If her heart was truly inflamed with his holy love, what raptures, what delights

at holy joy, thus to fasten, by the re-
 newing of her vows, those sacred bands that
 are to her attached to this heavenly Spouse.
 With what a relish, with what an interior
 devotion would she not dedicate herself to him?
 Again in time of temptation, that a Re-
 ligious ought to ratify her alliance with JESUS-
 CHRIST, since the devil, who tempts her,
 has no other view than to make her break
 & render her odious to this divine Spouse,
 who chose her for his glory. God gives to
 Religious the renewing of their vows, as an
 impenetrable shield against the darts of the
 Evil Spirit. As often as they renew them, they
 become more terrible to hell. They acquire
 greater strength to resist the devil. They are
 more agreeable to JESUS-CHRIST; they are
 more inflamed with his holy love, & daily
 increase in his sight in beauty & merit.

LVIII.

The more a Religious is poor, the more
 she is conformable to her divine Spouse. She
 must strive to partake of the different states
 of this mortal life, as he will make her share
 with him his Kingdom in Heaven. Now po-
 verty is one of the virtues which JESUS-
 CHRIST practised in a more remarkable, &
 convincing manner. A Religious to comply truly
 with her state of poverty, ought not to dis-
 pose of any thing without permission; she
 ought not to put herself on the footing of
 making presents to Seculars; the truly poor
 has nothing to give; she ought to receive
 nothing without her Superiors Knowledge,
 nor keep any thing contrary to her intention.
 She ought not to make any considerable ex-

122 THE PERFECT

pences ; she ought not thro' importunity
tort from the Superior any permission,
obtain any by surprize , making use of
vocations , or other crafty means. She
to have nothing in her Cell that is rare
precious , but every thing in it ought to
simple & conformable to religious pove
She ought to have nothing superfluous ,
ought to be content with what is necess
She ought to bear with patience & meek
of mind the wants annexed to her state ;
ought to support in silence for the love
JESUS-CHRIST , if others in the common
tributions have a better share , or are
ferred before her.

LIX.

A disengagement of the heart & affect
from all riches must accompany our exte
poverty ; without which we might repro
ourselves with being poor only in outw
shew & appearance. Renounce to all desir
& even to thoughts of the goods & rich
of the earth ; & if you have abandoned gr
ones when you entered into Religion ,
not glory in it , even in thought , as
considerable sacrifice , since all the treasur
of the world are nothing in comparison
those , that are prepared for you in the Ce
stial Inheritance. Do not prefer yourself
those who had less to leave than you ,
almighty God will not so much regard
you exteriorly left , as the renouncing &
fengagement of your heart. A Religious
had scarce any pretensions in the world
she entered into the Monastery ; but
did not keep in her heart any affection

things of this world, & who has sincerely spoused JESUS-CHRIST alone for all her future, & her only possession, such a Religious is truly, and according to the Gospel, preferable to another, who has renounced to a rich Inheritance in the world, should set too great a value upon it, keep an affection, or esteem for it.

LX.

Religious commits a great fault in attaching herself to little pieces of furniture, that are curious, & of great neatness; in loving to have her Cell adorned with cuts, miniatures, pictures in gilt frames, China ware & other like embellishments, after she has sacrificed to God all she could have possessed in the world. Is not this making use of some reserve & restriction with God, & running the risk of losing in great part the merit of poverty, she has made a vow of? If JESUS-CHRIST regards the dispositions of the heart, will he find in hers a poverty truly Evangelical to recompence? And may he not reproach her with being more tied, & attached to her little trinkets, than a Queen is to the Jewels & Diamonds of her Crown? This without doubt may be looked upon as a very dangerous snare, which the devil makes use of to render fruitless in a great many, the abdications they make of the riches of the World. It could not hinder them from taking the first step towards perfection, when they made their vows; he strives to stop them in their course by entangling them with trifles, more to amuse children, than to take up the thoughts of a Spouse worthy of JESUS-CHRIST.

124 THE PERFECT
LXI.

A Religious must have a particular care what Religion commits to her, whether for her own use, or for that of the Community. She ought to do it, not thro' avarice, but in the Spirit of poverty. It is not permitted her to let her habit, her veil, or her other things spoil, or decay thro' an affected negligence no more than those things committed to her care in the office she is in. This also regards in particular the Lay Sisters, who have a greater share in the management of the Temporal than the Choir Nuns. Not only they ought not to dispose of any thing without the knowledge of the Superior, but are also obliged to manage, & husband the least thing with a faithful œconomy; without it they will have a great account to render to JESUS CHRIST, for having prevaricated against the promise, & committed an injustice in regard of their Monastery.

LXII.

The Monastery is not in a condition to furnish you with all that is wanting, & necessary; & you have a considerable pension to supply that defect; but when you have laid out what is sufficient for your particular wants, what do you do with the remains? If you spend them in useless & superfluous things, you are not poor, & no one in the world would think it hard to be poor at that rate. Think not therefore that you are more Mistress, or have your pension more at your own disposal, than you even have the rents of the Monastery; you have no greater right to it, & if you think otherwise, you know

little of your State, & are greatly de-
 ed. It would be still much worse, were you
 self to keep the money, were you to
 rd it up according to your fancy; were you
 dispose of it against the known Will of the
 erior; were you to deposite any sums out
 he Monastery with Secular people to keep
 n for you against the time of need; were
 to enter into any partnership with them,
 hereby become a merchant, what abuse
 t confusion, what disorder, or rather
 sacrilege!

LXIII.

A Religious has a pension, & having ta-
 out of it what is necessary for herself, &
 ch the Community is not able to provide
 with, she employs the rest with leave in
 ul reparations in the Monastery. Ano-
 makes no repairs, but resigns up her
 sion to the Superior, who furnishes her
 of it with what she wants, & disposes of
 rest as she thinks proper for the good of
 Community. To which of these two Re-
 ous would you give the preference? If
 leave it to my decision, I shall tell you,
 first does well; & the second does better.
 you will say, the first makes very useful
 airs; she has bought a fine Albe; she has
 cured a rich Vestment, a magnificent An-
 ndium; she has paved the whole Sanctuary
 a marble; & you think her less worthy
 praise than the second, who contents her-
 with giving up her pension to the Supe-
 , to dispose of it as she pleases, or to
 d it in the maintenance of the Commu-
 , without leaving any lasting monument,

or remembrance of it. Yes, I repeat it, the first is commendable, the second is more so because she shews a more perfect disengagement of the heart from Riches and the things of this world.

LXIV.

It often happens that when a Monastery has wherewithal, the particular Religious practise the vow of poverty better; because the Community, supplying them with what is necessary, does it not according to the inclinations of each particular, but according to the Spirit of the Rule, which is a Spirit of simplicity & uniformity. But when the Monastery is poor, & does not supply the particulars with their wants, some particulars are often rich, & full of money, & practise poverty very ill. Which made the great Theresa say, that she would willingly have her Convents, either well rented, or to have nothing, & trust altogether on providence; so that her Religious, abandonning themselves entirely to it, should merit it's particular protection. A want of this dependance on providence makes many Religious in poor Monasteries provide themselves, & take the precautions against a misery & want they are afraid of. Thus one consumes herself by an excessive labour; another plays the merchant, which brings her in a great deal more than what she wants. Every one heaps up money, every one in this case keeps her gain, or her depositum, as goods acquired to herself, which neither the Community, nor the Superior has a right to touch, which is so gross an abuse that, it is a wonder how they can dissemble it, & not see it in themselves.

Some Religious are very poor as to their particular, & even quite disengaged from whatever regards themselves, but who have a sort of ambition for their Monastery, that passes the limits of discretion, & which hinders them, under a pretext that they do not seek their own proper advantage, but only that of the Community. This appears more in their conduct, when any young Postulant presents herself to be received; She never brings enough to please them. She must have a portion, she must have her wardrobe, she must have a present for the Church; & happen she is if, after having reasonably provided for all, they do not bring her some arrears to pay, or find out some new present to make. It is still worse when the postulant is rich, & has in her own power the disposal of what she has. They then push her on to give a more considerable portion than the common, & to signalize herself in favour of the Monastery, that becomes her own dwelling place for the rest of her life. Her wardrobe must be well stored & magnificent; there are never shifts, aprons, handkerchiefs, &c. &c. &c. One might think, that entering into Religion she must equip herself for an age. An ordinary present to the Society would not do her honour, it would be no like an ordinary person; she must distinguish herself by her generosity, & for that she must be prodigal. In short they dare almost tell her, you are to dispose of what you have, & do it in favour of the Monastery.

128 THE PERFECT
LXVI,

Many abuses creep in on account of these things, that are demanded of those who have a mind to be Nuns. They must be in plenty & the finest. One might think that a worldly establishment was in view. The poverty they make a profession of, is forgot, & they only consult what pleases nature, or interest. If the linen is not of the finest, if the stuff is not of the best, it is laid aside; and what is infinitely worse, that alone perhaps is enough to hinder the Postulants being received. Thirst for avarice predominates in the hearts of those who by their profession have renounced the goods of the world; & the Spirit of simplicity is banished those places, where it has a right to fix its abode. It also follows from this abuse, that uniformity, so necessary for regular observance, does not suffer less than poverty & simplicity. As all who profess themselves are not equally rich, all cannot go to the same expences; so the one has handkerchiefs of an immoderate bigness; & another of a moderate size; this has very fine linen, & that of a quality much inferior. These inconveniences might be remedied by the Communitys taking upon it self to buy all that is ask'd of the parents of the Postulants, as well linen as stuffs, by choosing nothing, but what is simple & conformable to the spirit of poverty, & by doing it for all equally, both as to quantity & to quality.

LXVII.

If avarice is a vice in a Religious, it is no less a one in her to have a mind to appear liberal beyond discretion, & easily to yield up the

interests of the Monastery thro' a sort of generosity, that favours more of the spirit of the world, than of a true disengagement of heart. You have a mind to appear opulent, generous, magnificent : you affect a greatness of soul ; & in all this you shew nothing but vanity & pride. In vain would you alledge for excuse the disengagement you profess, for it is equally your duty to preserve the revenue of the Monastery, & if it goes to rack & ruin thro' your fault, you transgress at the same time against justice, & against poverty, & you must render an account to God of the consequences, the ruin of the Temporalities of the Monastery generally brings with it. This more particularly regards Superiors, Economists, Depositaries, Lay Sisters, & every Religious in the office she is put into. But what we here say must not be a motive for refusal, if you are in office, to refuse the Sisters that is necessary, under a pretence of saving the Community. Be upon the guard against yourself for fear of laying up sparings of equity which charity disowns, above all if you have any bent to avarice. We are but too ready to disguise, & cover our passions under a cloak of virtue, because we would not willingly have to reproach ourselves openly with doing ill ; and it is but too true, that an Economist refuses sometimes a Sister, what she ought to grant only because, deceiving herself in regard to the goods of the Community, she follows nothing in reality, but her own fancy & natural avarice.

LXVIII.

How little edifying is it in a Religious to

130 THE PERFECT

make a shew of a watch, or of a fine iron box at the Grate? In what do you employ money which is granted for your use, you who pride yourself in having such trinkets? Can you make this agree with the poverty you profess, & have promised to observe? A chamber, a bed, a table, an oratory, some chairs, & some pious pictures, & all in the greatest simplicity, ought to be enough, but it is not so with you. When you wish to draw retire, we must not say, Madame is gone to her Cell, but Madame is gone to her apartment; she has a chamber, an anti-chamber, a cabinet; what more? Furniture fit for a person of the world, & a bed even put up, mounted *à la Mode*. By what then can you be known to have made a vow of poverty?

LXIX.

Happy is that Religious who is poor according to the Spirit of the Gospel; that is, who possesses nothing as to the exterior, who is content with what is necessary, who, even in that necessary, has nothing but what is simple & ordinary; who has nothing superfluous, & would look upon every thing superfluous, as an occasion of vain solicitude & as an embarrassing yoke to her soul. Happy that Religious who is truly disengaged from all; who has raised herself above the goods of the earth, above all affection to creatures; who labours without intermission to raise herself above herself, & to seek herself in nothing. Happy is that Religious in whom the world is dead, & who is also dead to the world, & daily endeavours to die to herself. That Religious who has taken Jesus

RELIGIOUS. 131

CHRIST for her sole treasure, & for her only
 portion; who lends only to him, who seeks
 nothing but him, who only lives for him, &
 loses herself in him alone! O Religious in-
 tirely wise, prudent & happy, who has chose
 a better part, what words can expresse your
 happiness! O Virgin truly poor according to
 Gospel, what praise can we give you, that
 responds to your merits? You now are a
 Religious, a Spouse worthy of JESUS-
 CHRIST. He has found in your heart an
 agreeable mansion, as he said of the great
 Gertrude; He will therein fix his throne,
 he will be with you, he will be entirely yours,
 because, by your perfect disengagement, you
 are entirely his, & he is your all. Enjoy then
 his glory & your happiness Spouse of the
 great King; taste of his chaste & spiritual
 sweetness, & of that hidden Manna which
 reserves for those only, who are coura-
 geous & generous enough to despise, &
 expose on the whole world for his sake, &
 to set no other bounds to their ambition
 than the possession of the Kingdom of Hea-
 ven. You are the Glory of Religion; you are
 joy & consolation; you are the ornament
 & sweet odour of it. Would to God accord-
 ing to the expression of the Royal Prophet;
 (Isa. 44. v. 15.) That other Virgins were
 brought to the King after you; would to God,
 that you are a model to all the Community,
 that live in, that others walking in your steps
 imitating your example, they might be
 worthy to be presented to the King of all
 things by whom you are so beloved! Would
 to God that all the Religious, convinced of

132 THE PERFECT

your happiness, & penetrated with a desire to share it with you, would embrace true Evangelical poverty with all their affection, & not superficially, & in outward appearance only; but that they would make a progress in it, & arrive at length to a perfect practice of it.

LXX.

We often talk of poverty of Spirit, but do not understand it right, & frame to themselves a just idea of it. Does it only consist in renouncing to what one has in the world? This is the first step a Religious person is the first step towards virtue. Must we add to it an interior disengagement from riches? This again is a second step, but is not the all. Let us hear the incomparable Author of the Imitation of Jesus CHRIST. He will explain to us who is the poor of Spirit, how rare he is to be found, & how great is his merit. “Who shall be able to find a man that is truly poor in Spirit, & not of all things created? *His value is far & from the remotest coasts.* (Prov. xiii. 23.) If a man gives his whole substance, & loses nothing; and if he does great penance, & yet little; & if he attains to all knowledge, he is far off still; & if he has great virtue & exceeding fervent devotion, there is still much wanting to him; to wit one thing which is chiefly necessary for him, that he should have left all things else, he leave himself, and wholly gets out of himself, & retains nothing of self love; and what he shall have done all things which he knew should be done, let him think he has done nothing. Let him not make great account

of that which may appear much to be esteemed; but let him in truth confess himself to be an unprofitable servant; as truth itself has said (Luke 17.) : *When ye shall have done all that is commanded you, say: we are unprofitable servants.* Then may he be truly poor and naked in spirit, & may say with the Prophet (Ps. 24.) : *I am all alone & poor.* Yet no one is indeed richer than such a man; none more powerful, none more free; who knows how to leave himself & all things, & place himself in the very lowest place. „ Thus to renounce to all creatures, & to the love of ourselves; to look on ourselves as unprofitable servants, & place ourselves in the lowest place, is to be truly poor in spirit, & at the same time richest in spiritual goods, and the greatest in the eyes of JESUS-CHRIST. How truly worthy is such a state of a Religious's emulation!

LXXI.

Who can sufficiently express with how great circumspection a Religious ought to keep her body & soul in a most perfect purity? Had she that of Angels, would it be too great a one for a Spouse of JESUS-CHRIST? Every thing in her should favour of this virtue, precious, & at the same time so delicate. Let her exterior modesty speak & shew the interior one of her soul; let her be known as a chaste Spouse of a Man-God in the soberness of her looks, in the gravity of her carriage, in the always regular posture of her body. Let her be every where reserved, whether alone or in company; let her discourse be always edifying; never let her utter

M

134 THE PERFECT

one single word unworthy of her state; her in short endeavour to resemble, both her interior & exterior, the Angels of the Lord.

LXXII.

All discourses, all pictures that are capable to shock, or give the least umbrage to the most exact modesty, ought to frighten a sacred Spouse of JESUS-CHRIST. She ought to guard her senses, & keep them under so strict rule, that the Angelical virtue we are speaking of, may reside in her soul with all security. It will so, as long as the doors of her senses are kept shut to all exterior objects, & flying the occasions of resting upon them by a holy reservedness.

LXXIII.

This holy reservedness, & a modest composure of the body is a mark of a regular & recollected Religious; for an interior collection carries us of it self to an exterior modesty, & this buds from it as a flower does from it's stalk. But when a Religious begins to be interiorly dissipated, & to grow loose in her mind, she also begins to open her eyes & easily gives them full liberty to stare about here & there; she does not walk with the same gravity; she elevates her voice, she is full of action in talking, she breaks out into clamours & loud laughs, & proves by her exterior thus dissipated, the inward dissipation of her mind & heart.

LXXIV.

A Religious ought to be grave every where but particularly at Acts of Community. All glances & ogling of the eyes, all signs,

ling, all whispering; a too easy posture, wanton & too familiar gestures, are all to be entirely banished from them. Each Religious ought to respect the Community assembled, & the Community assembled ought to be one Body, composed of what is serious & grave.

LXXV.

The Religious, who have Pensioners under their care, ought not to permit that they should flatter or fawn upon them, nor shew them a tender & sensible amity, by kisses, or other caresses, little suitable to the exactness of that modesty they ought to make an open & public profession of. With how much greater reason ought they to interdict themselves, & abstain from the same familiarities in regard to their Religious Sisters. All this is most unbecoming & unworthy of a Virgin, who ought always to be grave & serious, & of a holy house of God, who is holiness it self.

LXXVI.

A Religious, sometimes in writing, is easily to slip & deviate from the rules of a proper gravity. She ought nevertheless not to be reserved when she writes, & in her Letters, than when she is in the Parlour, & in her words. I may even venture to say, she ought to be more watchful over herself, because the presence of those she is with at the table, inspires a modesty; whereas in writing she seems to be under less constraint to lay down what she has conceived in her heart. It is more difficult to say a thing out of the way, than to write it. Besides we know the style of a Letter ought to be natural &

136 THE PERFECT

easy, & thereupon we write so naturally, to make ourselves more familiar than convenient & proper. We pen down our thoughts & affections as they flow from the heart; & if we chance to be of a soft moving nature, & to have a little wit & vivacity, we blend them together in our letters, either thro' vanity, or thro' inclination, & always to the detriment of gravity, & of a holy reservedness. Was you to write to the most holy person of the world, in whom also you have placed an entire confidence; do it in such a manner as never to go beyond the limits of your profession. Be simple, but not familiar; be serious, but not affected; shun all expressions, that shew a tenderness & eagerness beyond bounds: write, in a word, in such a manner, that were your letters to be read in publick, no body may find any thing in them but what is edifying.

LXXVII.

Poetry is a fine talent, but it is not a little dangerous for a Religious, that is not thoroughly imbued with the spirit of her station. Be upon your guard if you are endowed with it, & have an itching that way. Sometimes the desire of bringing it to perfection, pushes us on, to peruse the great Masters of the art, who, by misfortune, have scarce ever excelled it but on prophane subjects, that excite & move passions. The intrigues of love are as it were, the soul of Tragedies, Comedies & of all Theatrical performances; all chiefly run in that strain. You are desirous of improving your talent by reading such pieces: What will be the consequence? You may cultivate your mind, but will pervert your heart.

May the lord take your talent from you, if you dare exercise it upon any Subjects unworthy of your vocation. May your hand never the very moment you would write any verses that express or excite any love or passion. O Fool ! Should you ever arrive to an excess ; how pernicious would your talent be to your soul, & how much better would it have been for you never to have it ? Why do you not employ it in holy articles to praise him that gave it you ? It may be here said that the Heathens condemn by their conduct. Virgil, the greatest Poet of antiquity, characterised his Hero Æneas by his piety to the Gods. Horace composed Hymns in their honour. And shall a Disciple of JESUS-CHRIST the true God, who is able to sing his praises with grace, & move others to do the same by her edifying compositions, make use of her talent to sing profane subjects ?

LXXIX.

Obedience ought to be the favourite virtue of a Religious. If she does not practise it, she is no more a Religious. If she does not love it, she no longer loves her state. It is in the exercise of this virtue, without which Religion cannot subsist, that a Religious finds consolation & security, since it is to her a certain mark of the Will of God. What she desires more comfortable in this life, than to be free of miseries, & wherein all is full of dangers, than to know what God demands of her, is to practise it. And for this it is enough, that she is obedient. The order of a Superior is

138 THE PERFECT

to her the order of God ; in submitting herself to it , she submits to God , she accomplishes his divine Will ; & in accomplishing it , she sanctifies herself.

LXXX.

Obedience ought to be prompt , to be simple , to be blind ; it ought to be both in great & little things ; it ought to be in the difficult occasions , as well as in things that are easy ; it ought to be in all times , & in short in the mind , in the heart , & in our actions . Many qualities that form a perfect obedience & that render it's acts most precious in the sight of God.

LXXXI.

Religious obedience is a submission of our Wills to that of another for the love of God so that this virtue is not only an external practice , but ought to be accompanied with a good disposition of the heart . A Religious ought to look upon God in the person of her , who has his Authority , and ought to submit for the love of him . If she is deficient in these two points , she will be tempted either not to obey , or to obey but very imperfectly.

LXXXII.

The whole life of JESUS-CHRIST was a continual exercise of obedience to the Will of his heavenly Father . He says himself , (John . v. 3. & 6. v. 38.) That he came to do the Will of him that sent him ; & St. Paul adds (Phill. c. 2. v. 8.) : *He humbled himself becoming obedient to death , even the death of the cross* . Weigh seriously each word of JESUS-CHRIST & of his Apostle . JESUS-CHRIST says : I always do the Will of my heavenly Father ; so

was born when his heavenly Father would have him born; He chose a stable for the place of his birth, & a manger for his cradle, because his Father would have it so. He fled from Herod & retired into Egypt, from whence he afterwards returned into Judea, because his Father would have it. If he was obedient to his holy Mother, & St. Joseph; he staid in the temple at the age of twelve years, & disputed there with the Doctors, was to fulfill the Will of his Father; he did not prevent the time of manifesting himself by preaching the Gospel, but he did it when his Father would have him. When he raised the dead and cured the sick; or when he raised such a dead man & not another; when he healed this leper & not that; when he freed his possessed & not the other; it was only because such was the Will of his heavenly Father. He did not undertake any journey, any little way, any step; he did not work any miracle, nor even speak one single word, but that it was to do the Will of his Father. All was regulated & guided in him by this divine obedience; in all & every where he was obedient. Let us follow St. Paul in what he says. JESUS-CHRIST was equal to his Father, since he was God, as he is, & nevertheless he humbled himself, & became obedient even to death, & that on a cross. O what a subject of Meditation upon religious obedience! JESUS-CHRIST was equal to his heavenly Father, & his equality did not hinder him being obedient to him. It was not a simple submission, but a submission that reached to an entire & profound abasement and

annihilation. He became obedient ; but how long ? Even to death ; that is to say during the whole time of his mortal life. And to what death ? To the death of the cross. Howsoever hard , howsoever dolorous , howsoever cruel , howsoever ignominious the death was , he submitted to it thro' obedience to the Will of his heavenly Father. This example needs not to be accompanied with any long reflections to make it more touching. It carries it's force with it self , & alone preaches obedience with a divine energy. Let us content ourselves with drawing from it the same consequences, which the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST draws, (B. 3. c. 13. n. 1. &c.) who thus introduces this divine Master speaking to a pious soul. „ Because
 „ thou hast yet too inordinate a love for thy
 „ self , therefore thou art afraid to resign
 „ thy self wholly to the Will of others. But
 „ what great matter is it , if thou who art
 „ but dust & a meer nothing , submittest thy
 „ self for Gods sake to man ; when I the All-
 „ mighty & most-High , who created all
 „ things out of nothing , have for thy sake
 „ humbly subjected my self to man. I became
 „ me the most humble & most abject of all
 „ men , that thou mayst overcome thy pride
 „ by my humility. Learn , O dust , to obey ;
 „ learn to humble thy self , thou who art but
 „ dirt & mire ; & to cast thy self down under
 „ the feet of all men. Learn to break thy
 „ own Will , & to yield thy self up to all sub-
 „ jection. Conceive an indignation against
 „ thy self , suffer not the swelling of pride
 „ to live in thee ; but make thy self so sub-

missive & little, that all may trample on thee, & tread thee under their feet as the dirt of the streets. „ This Author demands nothing, in what he says, extraordinary, for he has proposed for a model the example of JESUS-CHRIST. What in reality can be effective in the profound annihilation of a creature, when JESUS-CHRIST for the love of him has so highly debased himself, as to have done it beyond all bounds, & without measure. How much to the quick ought not this example to touch the heart of a Religious ! how powerfully ought it to affect her mind, how greatly ought she to be excited, animated, encouraged by it, not to spare herself the exercise of obedience.

LXXXIII.

In consequence of the example of JESUS-CHRIST, a Religious ought always to fear her own Will, & always to seek to practise obedience, being persuaded that the Will of God will never be better accomplished in her, & JESUS-CHRIST never reign more perfectly in her heart, than when she renounces most to her own Will, & submits to the holy laws of obedience. So likewise she ought to be extremely pleased & satisfied when any thing is commanded her, that is contrary to her desires, that disappoints her projects, or thwarts her inclinations ; & her disposition in this ought to be so well known to the Superiors, that they may have no difficulty to give her orders against her natural inclination ; or rather that they may think thereby to second her pious desires, as well as her fervour to advance in this holy self denial.

• 142 THE PERFECT
LXXXIV.

O how strait are the paths of an obedient Religious ! how beautiful her steps ! how meritorious in the sight of God her way ! nothing of all she does thro' obedience escapes the eye of her divine Spouse, who with complacency beholds her submitting herself for the love of him to the Will of others, who will recompense her in this life with particular graces, & in the next with a high degree of glory. Hence a Religious ought to think nothing troublesome when obedience is in question ; she ought to embrace what is difficult with a holy zeal & gladness of heart ; she never ought to neglect any thing that is commanded her. She ought to serve with a scrupulous attention the least occasion of obeying, like one that is careful & desirous of pleasing JESUS-CHRIST. She ought to endeavour by this virtue to give a new lustre & value to all she does in Religion, always proposing to herself the motive of obedience besides that she may have of other virtues.

LXXXV.

Did you in the person of your Superior only consider almighty God. Did you obey her only for the love of him ; you would equally submit to her for whom you have less affection, as well as to her for whom you have a greater. You would even apply yourself to submit punctually to the least orders of the first, for fear the want of friendship for her should steal from you something of the perfection of your obedience. The more it is against your grain to obey, the greater violence would you use to submit, & overcome

RELIGIOUS. 143

yourself. You would make the difficulty have to obey, serve to render your obedience more pure, & more free of self love. Short you would equally obey one Superior, as well as another, whether her humour, or her character is agreeable to you, whether you have any disgust or aversion to her. Because it is not her you would regard, but only God in her; who never changes, while your Superior does. But should you square your obedience by your natural inclinations; should you have any regard to the quality of the person, & to what she is to you; then it can be truly said you have no longer God in view; it is no longer God, nor for God you obey; but it is your own inclination, it is to content your self love.

LXXXVI.

It does not belong to you to examine, what your Superior commands, nor why she commands you; all you have to do is to obey. Your Superior will give an account to God of the orders she gave you, & of the motives why she gave them; & you will render an account of your obedience. God will judge her intentions & your submission. If she places you in such an office thro' fancy, antipathy, or out of a secret malicious pleasure, to vex you, [I here carry it very far] God one day will punish her. But should you imagine & frame to yourself these notions; should you harbour these preventions against her; should you on that account give yourself up to murmuring, to sadness, to spite, to impatience; should you fail to obey, or obey God will equally punish you.

144 THE PERFECT LXXXVII.

You ought to impose silence on your mind as soon as ever you find it inclined to reason, pry into, & examine what is commanded you. Self love in concert with the devil will not fail on occasions to furnish you with arms & arguments contrary to obedience. It cannot hinder you from submitting cheerfully, it retires & intrenches it self, as were, in the imagination, & there maintains it self. It makes you find fault with what the Superior ordains; it represents it either as contrary to the way, or hard, or unjust. Sometimes it will tell you that the Superior makes use of a preference & distinction of persons; sometimes she wants discretion, & at other times only acts thro' the instigation of her favourites. Ah good God! If you listen to this love, what will it not suggest to you to dissuade you from obeying, or at least to render your obedience defective & imperfect. I repeat it over again, in obeying you ought to raise up your mind above all creatures, consider nothing but God, & all these thoughts will vanish.

LXXXVIII.

As disobedience is often accompanied with pride, so likewise you ought to give a great value to your obedience by practising in it the spirit of a sincere humility. When you are told, obey your Superior, you ought to understand it in the same sense as if you were told, humble your reason, your Will, & submit them to the reason & Will of your Superior; make your own understanding yield to hers; subject your views to hers; force your

stubborn

born Will, & make it bend under her yoke. Destroy all pride, & all self love. Be docile & humble as a child; debase, in a word, & annihilate yourself, thro' obedience in Imitation of Jesus-CHRIST; & die to yourself, in making your Will die by an humble & blind submission. O how terrible are these maxims to the flesh! How self love trembles at the thoughts of them! How pride and self conceit frets & fumes at reading them! But be courageous enough to undertake the practice, & you will experience how sweet the yoke is, & how light it appears to you so heavy & cumbersome.

LXXXIX.

Let the Novices be well grounded in this; & this without intermission be instilled into them, & let their Mistress endeavour so to inculcate it into their minds, that it may never be effaced, or forgot. They ought to look upon the grace of their vocation, as a heavenly seed sown by God in their hearts, & which they continually ought to water with the fresh streams of holy obedience, that it may grow in their souls, & bring forth the fruit of all religious virtues. A Novice that applies herself sincerely to submit her Will, will never fail of succeeding in Religion. Is she free of faults? Does she know but to obey, we may look upon her amendment as certain. On the contrary, if she has a thousand good qualities, & has not that of being docile & obedient, we ought to repute them for nothing.

XC.

What can be thought of a Religious, with whom the Superior is obliged to proceed cautiously, & take proper measures to assure

146 THE PERFECT

herself of her submission, when she has nothing to order her, or any office to put her in; without which she might perhaps find herself stubborn & froward? Is she to be placed in the number of the truly obedient Religious? She is far from having made any progress in that virtue. Only she is to be called truly obedient, who has no other Will, than that of her Superior; who is always disposed to obey her; & of whom the Superior can say, as the Centurion in the Gospel (Matt. 8. v. 9.) of those under him: *I say to this, Go, & he goeth; & to Another, come, & he cometh; & he doth it.*

XCI.

A Religious that employs any cunning, craft to make her Superior incline to her opinion, & bring her to her own Will, has not the merit of obedience; since in reality she does not obey her, but rather induces her to obey herself, obliging her by address, & opportunities to condescend to her desires. There are nevertheless certain occasions, in which a Religious may represent to her Superior, her reasons to move her to dispense with her what she commands: but these representations must be accompanied with meekness, humility & submission of mind; & having acknowledged her reasons, she ought to be contented & follow what the Superior decides, without any farther resistance.

XCII.

Forget even the very habit of saying, *My will, I desire, I will do it*: perfect obedience knows no such language of self will; & no one in Religion ought to desire any thing,

at the Superior wills. Prudence & charity, as true, require she should govern with weakness, & rather ask her Religious to do what she ordains, than command them with authority. But if she departs from this rule, & should command with haughtiness & petulance, her indiscretion ought not to move you to revolt; rejoice that you have thereby an occasion to overcome your pride & delicacy, in submitting yourself with mildness. The more your obedience is free from self-love, the more agreeable it will be to almighty God.

XCIII.

A Religious ought to endeavour to render herself capable of all the offices & employs of the Monastery; but she ought neither to solicit for any, nor refuse any. Her dependence on the Superior ought to be perfect in all, as well as in all other things: Whether in what office she is put in, be more or less honorable; whether it be easy or difficult, she ought to accept it in the spirit of obedience, without listening to self-love, always fertile in pretexts to elude what is troublesome, & to seek what is pleasing. What would it be in a Monastery, wherein every Religious should presume a right of accepting only of what she employs, that are agreeable to their fancy? She that loves to be retired, & in her solitude, would never acquiesce to be Portress, or at the Gate; & she who delights in company, would solicit, & make interest to be Mistress of the Pensioners. And thus it would be out of a Superior's power to make the necessary dispositions in the distribution of offices.

148 THE PERFECT

ces, for the greater good of the Monasteries & for the keeping up of regular discipline. And the Religious being placed in their different employs, only according to their inclinations: those who have any virtues might justly reproach themselves with being idle in their offices, only thro' their own Will & those who have none, would only occasion a confusion in the post they occupy.

XCIV.

Self love in a Nun, who is, in other respects, pious & religious, sometimes, like the devil, disguises & transforms it self into an Angel of light, & makes her imagine she perceives dangers contrary to her perfection in the employs assigned her, whilst it is only the better to follow her own taste & inclination, which egg her on to seek to be exempt. Thus a Religious, that does not love to appear & make herself known, & who tastes the tranquillity of her Cell, where, without hindrance & interruption, she performs her exercises of devotion; & her work in ease & silence, cannot, without an extreme reluctance, resolve to take upon her the care of the Gate, of the Sacristy, of the Pensionary. She must be pressed, solicited, urged, and even the Authority of her Director must be made use of to make her submit. She thinks she shall lose all that recollection she has acquired in her retirement; that she shall not be able to perform any longer her prayers with attention; that she shall be in a continual dissipation; and running away with the fancies, she puts herself in a bad humour: she is so sensibly touched as to weep & cry

breakes out perhaps into murmurings, & way to trouble & uneasiness, & in part, by her repeated importunities, & forwardness in the discharge of her office, forcing the Superior to take her out of it. But to take this Religious, so little docile, sensible of the great error, & illusion she is in, need only send her to examine her conduct by the rules & maxims of the Saints; & let her afterwards resolve herself. Now the Saints have taught us, both by their instructions & example, that obedience is preferable to satisfaction, & particularly so in Religious; that it is always more certain, we do the Will of God in obeying, & are more agreeable to Him, than in following our own Will, even in the most holy practices, that are only of devotion, & of counsel. That almighty God supports & helps us in the employ he puts us in by obedience; but that we never deserve his help & succour in what we do against obedience, & to follow our own choice. That it is better in Religion to be occupied the whole day in an exterior distracting exercise, when it is thro' obedience, than to apply ourselves to prayer, or to keep a strict retirement in our Cell; when it is to satisfy our own Will. If then a Religious, in the case I speak of, judges of her conduct by these maxims, she will find it to be nothing but a disguise & pretence of self love, & a true error & illusion. Has she in reality any just reason, & unknown to the Superior, to excuse herself from accepting the office, she is in, she may represent it to her. But, as we have already said, she must do it with

150 THE PERFECT

simplicity & modesty; & afterwards let
with a calm indifferency abide by what
Superior decides of it.

XCV.

You are offended & in a pet, because
do not give you any employ, & because
seem to forget, or neglect you in the distri-
bution of offices. You will not accept of
office, in which you would be too much
& concealed in the Monastery; & you would
fain have a more conspicuous one, in which
you might appear, & shew yourself to the eyes
of the world. You refuse a post of a meaner
or less rank, because you have been in more
considerable ones before; in short, you will
not take upon yourself any office, because
they would not grant you that you desire.
But what is all this? If you think you have
right to act after this manner; there is then
no more obedience, no more dependance,
no more subordination, no more humility in
Religion, & by consequence, regularity is
ruined in your Monastery, since it only subsists
by these virtues. O self love, O self will!
how fatal are you to Religious houses!

XCVI.

Subordination chiefly maintains Monasteries
in the vigour of regular observance. It
is owing to it, as much as to charity, that
they are mansions of peace, consolation &
holiness. The want of it on the contrary,
the occasion of their fall & total ruin,
makes them the habitations of trouble &
confusion. To keep up this dependance as
ought, the Ancients must give an example
to the Young of an humble submission to the

perior; & the Young ought to labour with their might to perfect themselves in obedience, that they may, when ancient, give their turn, an example of perfect submission to those, who come after them. Moreover, there ought to be a subordination betwixt the Young & the Old, grounded upon good order, humility & charity, by which the young Religious shew to the Ancients the respect that is due to them on account of their age, of their experience in Religion, of their virtues; & the Ancients have for the Young an affability, a meekness, an affection, a tenderness & veneration, which the title of Sister, & that of the Spouse of JESUS-CHRIST demands from them.

XCVII.

The Ancients, who, on account of their age, or because they have been in the first places of the Monastery, imagine they have a right to criticise the conduct of the Superior, or take upon themselves to govern her, & force her for peace sake, to suffer in silence their murmurings, & their untractableness; these Ancients, I say, are led away by a gross mistake, & give a very sedifying example. What have you done when for so long a time you have been Religious, if you have not learnt to respect your Superior, & to be obedient to her? And what will the Young ones learn from you, if you do not by your example teach them the practice of obedience? May we not with justice say of you, what the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST says (B. 1. c. 23. n. 2.): "Many count the years of their

„ of their conversion, but often times
 „ fruit of their amendment is but small.
 Let us add, that the young Religious, who
 in their respect & deference to the Ancients
 & who shew so little docility & humility, that
 an Ancient dares not give them a charitable
 admonition, or correction; let us, I say, say
 that there is nothing to be expected from
 them for the time to come, but a total
 dependency & relaxation; & if the hopes
 the Monastery for its regularity are built
 upon such subjects, they are ill grounded,
 threaten certain ruin to it.

XCVIII.

A Religious ought to look upon all her
 Sisters as her Superiors, & by consequence
 respect them as so many persons, whom their
 virtue & merit have raised above her. She
 ought to obey them, according as prudence,
 charity, & discretion demand, so that there
 is nothing against the orders of the Superior,
 the observance of the Rule, nor against
 conscience. The Ancients even may practise
 this submission towards the Young, using
 some condescendance in their regard, &
 doing them certain little favours with sweetness,
 complaisance, & affability; & the
 Young with much greater reason ought to
 submit to the Elders thro' respect and veneration.
 The Author of the Imitation of Jesus
CHRIST gives an excellent Rule for this
 „ Bow down thy self then humbly, says he
 „ (B. 3. c. 49. n. 7.), at present, under the
 „ hands of all, & heed not who it was, that
 „ has said, or commanded this: but let it be
 „ thy great care, that whether thy Superior

or Inferior, or Equal desire any thing of thee, or hint at any thing, thou take all in good part, & labour with a sincere Will to perform it.

XCIX.

Every Religious ought to practise what we have just said, more particularly towards those who are in offices, in submitting to what they demand in virtue of their charge. Thus, she ought to obey the Portress, as her Superior in that office, & go with a spirit of submission & obedience, without too great delay, when called to the Grate. She ought likewise to obey the Infirmarian or sick-Mother, as her Superior in time of sickness, & surrender herself to her charitable care, renouncing her own Will, & overcoming her aversion & repugnancy, whether for the medicines, remedies, or leaves, the sick-Mother requires she stands in need of. Such a behaviour observed in a spirit of dependance, of purity, & of humility, is of a very great merit in the sight of God, & consummates the perfection of obedience in a Religious.

C.

The office of Superior is a heavy burden, & very hard to carry, if we consider the obligations of it, & the account Superiors must have to render at the Tribunal of Jesus-CHRIST; & it seems incomprehensible how the Religious are so ambitious, & desirous of it. They are in all appearance so much dazzled, & taken with the preeminence of the office, that they are deaf and blind to, & consider not the obligations of it, nor the anxious care & sollicitude, that accompanies

154 THE PERFECT

it. But whether you are in a Monastery, or in a regular Community; you ought always to dread the government of it: in the relaxed house, because you cannot authorize their disorders without exposing yourself with the rest to utter ruin; & also, because it is very hard to find an efficacious remedy to stem the tide of corruption: in the regular & reformed houses, because, whatever virtue is therein practised, it is necessary you should nourish & cherish it, should make it grow, & bring forth fruit; should extend your care & solicitude to the spiritual, & temporal welfare of the Community in general, & to each Religious in particular; so that, if you are not extremely on your guard, your mind occupied & divided by so many cares, is distracted & dissipated; & the heart often suffers, either because you cannot suffice for all, or because you cannot remedy all. O how happy is the state of a private Religious! O state replenished with delight & tranquillity, where you have nothing else to do, but to let yourself be governed, & to attend to the saving of your soul! Whosoever you are that reads this, remember that if, as the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST says, (B. I. c. 9. n. 1.) 'tis a very great thing to stand in obedience, to live under a Superior, & not to be at our own disposal; it is without comparison much securer to be in the state of obedience, than in authority; As the same Author adds. Therefore all Religious ought to keep a strict watch, not to let the more poisonous of ambition after places infect the

as; & so far from listening to, & nourishing within themselves, even the least appearance of it, they ought to be seized with it, & tremble at it. But if it happens they should be chosen to govern the Monastery, they ought to be sorry in themselves, & to humble themselves at it; & only to acquiesce in a resignation to the Will of God, & obedience to those Superiors, who have authority to confirm them in their office; & ought, in a word, to be as glad, & rejoice much to go out of their post, as an ambitious Religious would regret, & repine to sit.

CI.

Wo be to you, if chosen Superior of your Monastery, you should have a greater kindness for those, who gave you their suffrages, should retain any grudge or resentment for those, who did not contribute to your election by their votes. Wo be to you, should you think yourself injured & offended by their not doing for you; should you take it ill of them, should you harbour any rancour in your heart; should you carry it so far as to make it appear by complaints, by reproaches, by a cold and scornful air, or by any other disagreeable means. Wo, if that has any influence on your way in governing, so that you should thereby regulate yourself in the distribution of offices, & dispensation of favours. Wo in short be to you, if it should be a motive for your taking greater care of some than of others, whether it be in their different wants, spiritual, or temporal, or in their corporal sicknesses & infir-

156 THE PERFECT

mities. Such a behaviour would be no scandalous than hateful, & would draw down upon you the anger of God, in whose sight you would be more odious & terrible; the most hideous monster would be in your own.

CII.

A Superior ought to look upon herself, so much as having an authority over her Sisters, as one appointed by providence to serve them in their necessities; both of soul & body. She is no longer her own, she belongs to her Religious: all have a right to her friendship, without it's being permitted her to have a greater one for some than others. All have a right to her attention, to her care, her sollicitude, to her benifits, to her favours, to her tenderness, without being allowed her to shew the least preference. Her chamber ought to be open equally to all; she ought to receive all with the same mildness, & the same charity; she ought to have the same zeal for the perfection of all, to furnish them, with a holy ardour, the same means to attain it; to be sollicitous, & to join up her prayers to almighty God for them all; & as St. Paul (to the Romans c. 10. v. 12) said, that in JESUS-CHRIST there was no distinction of Jew or Greek, for that he was the same lord over all, rich & liberal to all that call upon him; so there ought not to be any distinction in the Superior as to her Religious, whether old or young; Professed, Novices, Choir, or Lay Sisters. All ought to find in her a true mother, to whom they may have recourse in their necessities,

pains, in particular cases, & in all occasions, as being all equally her children, & all the sacred Spouses of him, whose love she occupies in their regard.

CIII.

A Superior, the better to deserve the confidence of her Religious; ought to carry herself with so much circumspection in the Community, as not to give any room to suspect she is prejudiced, & has conceived a favorable opinion of some, & an unfavorable one of the others; for a blind prepossession of the mind, is one of the greatest faults a Superior can be guilty of; & it is still a more considerable one, to let it be perceived by the certain ways, too condescending for the one, & too difficult or harsh for others. Prudence and charity demand, that she should be extremely careful in this point; for failing in this she may hinder a great deal of good, and occasion a great deal of harm, in the Monastery. Another essential duty in a Superior, is to keep an inviolable silence, as to the secrets confided to her, so that the Religious may be more convinced of her probity & discretion in this, than of their own. Was a Religious to open herself to you with simplicity & freedom, & to make you a confidence of what passes in her interior; it is no less an effect of her esteem, & of the faith she has in your prudence, than a proof of her confidence: you ought then to correspond to the good opinion she has of you, not only in giving her the counsel & advice she asks, but also in keeping her secret; & if you miss this, how will she dare return to you ano-

ther time ? Do you not rather furnish her with an occasion of being on her guard against your indiscretion ? And would you have her expose herself, to be once more the sport & ridicule of your imprudence ? Another vertite you of a disorder, that reigns in the Monastery ; you correct & remedy it, but in such a manner, that you make known to the person who acquainted you. Is not this hindering every one from acquainting you for the future, in the like occasions ? Have you any reason or right to expect it ? You, who violate that right, which they have to expect & demand of your being discreet.

CIV.

A Superior ought always to be very much troubled & concerned, when she is obliged to correct any of her Religious. Was she on the contrary to take pleasure in doing it, she would prove herself thereby not to be endowed with a character of goodness, but to be of a peevish, quarelsome humour. Meekness & charity ought to be her favourite virtues, & ought to animate her whole conduct. She ought never to correct any one when she finds herself moved with anger, lest the passion should make her exceed in her expressions. She ought to expect till the emotion is ceased, & that her temper being in a more calm disposition, she may do it with more prudence, & more profit to the Religious, whom she is obliged to reprimand and correct. When an Inferior perceives that a Superior is angry in correcting her, she is more apt to accuse her of passion, than to think herself guilty : & so far from reaping any

antage from her correction, she receives it with murmuring, & often shews too sensible a resentment.

CV.

Receive with meekness & humility, the correction given you. The Superior suffers enough in giving it, without your aggravating her pain, by your insensibility of what is designed for your good. Consider her burden great, being charged to answer for your soul to almighty God. Apply to your Superior & to yourself, what St. Paul said heretofore to the Hebrews, (c. 13. v. 17.) on the omission they owed to their Pastors. *Obeys he, your Prelates, & be subject to them. they watch as being to render an account of your souls; that they may do this with joy, & not with grief, for this is not expedient for you.* Help then your Superior to support the weight of her charge, in giving her the consolation of receiving in good part, what she tells you for your spiritual good. Give her no reason to weep & bewail your untractableness; & at least, if her remonstrances prove ineffectual, you should be obliged to render a terrible account, at the Tribunal of JESUS-CHRIST; whilst she will have in his sight, the merit of having discharged her duty.

CVI.

Let the Novices learn here their duty towards their Mistress; & as they are liable, being more exposed to be corrected, either because being new in the practices of Religion, they commit more faults; or because they are to be brought up in all Religious virtues, they ought to receive humiliations & corrections; so ought they

to receive them with a perfect docility, never shew any pride or reluctance. Submit yourself to be corrected with a spirit of meanness, & for your own advantage; seek not to excuse yourself, nor to lessen or avoid the reprimand; drive far from your mind, & thoughts of resentment & of murmurs; cast those emotions, which self love raises in your breast. If you are not guilty of the fault, in which you are chid & corrected, instead of being eager to justify yourself, reflect & resolve not to fall into it hereafter; & consider at the same time, that you commit great many others, that are not known or seen, or which they seem not to perceive, not to be obliged to correct you every moment. Be in short persuaded, that whatever your Mistress says to you, is always for your good; that she uses you with a great deal of indulgence & moderation to spare your weakness, & was she to treat you with rigour she would be obliged to chide you without intermission, being so full of faults. Were these your dispositions, you would in a short time, make a great progress in the path of virtue, & would dispose yourself to arrive at a high perfection.

CVII.

You would make a very bad use of the correction given you, was you to impute to others the fault you are reprimanded for; or was you to judge & make secret inquiries, to know who advertised the Superior or Mistress of it, & to bear her a grudge for it, & reproach her with it afterwards. You, who proceed in this manner, know very little how

such correction, conduces to the glory of God, to the good order of the Monastery, to the sanctification of your soul. Ah! how would you be from such sentiments, had you the Spirit of the Saints! Should another commit the same fault you did, without any thing being said to her; whilst you are, & perhaps even very severely, reproached with it, what would you draw & conclude from hence? If you consult self love, it will tell you that they spare the others, that every thing is forgiven them, that nothing is said to them; because they perhaps love them better than you; that they are rigorous in your regard, that they are prejudiced against you, & that it is for no other reason they exaggerate your least faults, & thus it eggs you on to give way to murmuring, to jealousy, to resentment, to diffidence, to indolence. If you listen on the contrary to the voice of grace; grace will make you look upon the correction of a Superior, or of a Mistress, as a favour done to you, preferably to others; as a proof of the good opinion they have of you, since they presume you have virtue enough to receive their reproof with humility, & to profit by it; as a mark that they love you, & by consequence have a great deal & desire of your improving in Religious perfection, since they do not spare you in your faults, that you may know & correct them; & thus grace will induce you to consider their chapters, as a benefit to yourself, & not to receive them with meekness, with pleasure & with thanks. See then which you will follow; self love, that seeks & plots your

ruin ; or grace , that will conduct you to salvation.

CVIII.

Should you , when chid for a fault , be pensive in your mind , & want to know who could have discovered it to the Superior , or the Mistress ; you would not only abuse the correction given , but you would also make the devil triumph in you. What is it to you whether it was a particular Religious that acquainted the Superior , & who she was ? The only thing aimed at is yourself , the fault you committed , your endeavouring to mend yourself ; & it is only in this view , that thro' the spirit of charity you are corrected for it. If then , instead of receiving what was said to you , in the same spirit it was said , you apply yourself to raise a thousand suspicions , to frame a thousand judgments against these or those , to discover the person that told the Superior of your fault ; you change a most salutary remedy for your soul , into a mortal poison ; you make what was designed for its advantage , serve for its ruin. You fill your heart with gall , in an occasion , where they show nothing but charity to you ; & far from correcting yourself of a fault , according to the intention of the Superior , who represents to you , you commit many others , either receiving the correction ill , or by framing judgments , or harbouring thoughts of animosity , spite , or revenge , against those you think were the occasion of your being reprimanded. How much better would you do humbly to submit to the correction , to consider only how to profit by it , & to renounce

all the dictates & suggestions of self
 ve. You would thereby avoid many faults ;
 you would keep your heart in peace ; you
 would edify your Superior & your Sisters ,
 your humility ; you would make a Sacrifice
 God of your own inclinations , which
 would be more agreeable to him , than if you
 were to wear a hair-shirt for a week together.

CIX.

If we so expressly recommend to Religious
 have a perfect submission to their Superi-
 ors ; with how much greater reason , ought
 we to preach to them , to be subject to their
 ecclesiastical ones ; who , according to the
 order of Hierarchy , established by our Lord
 JESUS-CHRIST , have a much greater authority
 over them ? Let them remember , when this
 divine Master said to his Apostles , *He that*
hears you , hears me , He also said it to the
 Prelates that succeeded them in the Episcopacy ;
 and if this order of being obedient to them ,
 given by this great Master to all the Faith-
 ful ; how can those Sacred Virgins , whom
 the Bishop himself has offered to almighty
 God , & covered with the holy veil at the
 foot of the altar , in sign of their consecration ;
 how can they , I say think themselves exemp-
 ted ; or rather what example ought they not
 to set to all Christians , of that respect & sub-
 mission , that is due to them. Respect infini-
 tely your Ecclesiastical Superiors , be obe-
 dient to them as to JESUS-CHRIST , whose
 representatives they are ; never resist their or-
 ders , lest you resist the authority of God they
 are invested with : add moreover a confi-
 dence to your respect & submission, Look

164 THE PERFECT

upon the Bishops as your spiritual Fathers full of tenderness & charity for you ; & behave yourselves towards them , that , you are the chosen portion of their flock , you may also by your obedience , be their & consolation.

CX.

The Author of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST, observes with all the Fathers of spiritual life, that Self-denial & Humility are the two principal foundations of a Religious life. " He , (B. 1. c. 17. n. 2.) that seeks
 „ Religion any other thing , than purely God
 „ & the salvation of his soul , shall find
 „ thing but trouble & Sorrow ; neither
 „ he long remain in peace , who does
 „ strive to be the least & subject to all. That
 „ camest hither to serve & not to govern
 „ know that thou art called to suffer &
 „ labour , not to be idle & talkative. Hence
 „ then men are tried as gold in a furnace
 „ Here no man can stand, unless he be willing
 „ with all his heart , to humble himself
 „ the love of God. „ Excellent lessons , that
 equally regard the Monasteries of women ,
 well as the Convents of men. They contain
 all that can be said, with any solidity , to estab-
 lish & preserve in them , the peace & happi-
 ness of Religious persons.

CXI.

Live then in an entire dependance on
 others , if you have a mind to preserve in you
 peace & tranquillity of mind , & to advance
 the perfection of your calling. Labour to be-
 come sincerely humble , if you would reach
 the spiritual sweets of a Religious life. Do

kon to advance much in virtues, if you
 destitute of these two. If you have them
 , the least trial will discourage you, & you
 only give bad example, instead of shewing
 true piety. What difference betwixt a Re-
 ligious truly humble, & one that is not so!
 You will always see the first meek & patient,
 when contradicted; peaceable, when calum-
 nized; docile, when commanded any thing;
 when with haughtiness & without discretion;
 always ready to yield, when any one would
 dispute and contest with her. On the contrary,
 Religious that has not acquired a fund
 of humility, belies her virtue in the same
 circumstances; she is troubled, she is chag-
 ged; she is vexed, impatient, angry & pas-
 ionate; she shews all the sensibility of an un-
 fortified soul, full of self love. It appe-
 ars, that her piety is like a house bu-
 ilt on a rock sand, that can't maintain it self against
 the least storm. O how necessary is hum-
 ility to Religious Communities to preserve peace,
 to advance the progress of piety; they
 will grow in virtue in proportion to
 their humility; & their virtue will v-
 enture on the least occasion, if they are not humble.

CXII.

Hold it for a constant truth, that pride is
 always odious, & humility is always loved,
 esteemed & respected. This is so true, that
 they who are most proud; can not suffer
 those that are so; that it is an injury, an
 affront to any one, to call him proud; that
 the most refined pride often cloaks it self,
 under the appearance of humility, to make it
 the more esteemed; that in short if it

166 THE PERFECT

was permitted to seek the esteem of creatures, the most sure way to gain it, would be to be humble & practise humility. A proud Religious is always a burden to her Community, she is looked upon as a dangerous spirit, of a character enemy to society, as one capable of every thing, but of doing good. It is pride that brings forth ambition & breeds factions & divisions in Religious Communities. It is pride that excites jealousies, scandalous quarrels, inveterate hatreds & animosities. O how many evils spring from the root of pride ! Were there only three Religious in a Monastery, if they are proud, they will not be able to live two days together, without some strife & quarrel ; because pride inspires a no less contempt for others, than a vain esteem of ones self ; this contempt is an enemy to peace & union. Was a Community on the contrary composed of a thousand Religious ; if they are humble, an admirable peace will reign among them ; their union would be only more strict & charity would triumph, & enjoy all its rights & advantages. Let this be well inculcated into the Novices, & let them hasten to acquire a true humility, the humility of the heart. In recommending it to them, it is as much as if we said to them : you will become the most tender consolation & ornament of your Monastery ; you will taste the sweetest fruits of a Religious life ; you will render your piety solid, & your contentment almost unalterable ; you will be Spouses according to the heart of JESUS-CHRIST ; you will have peace with God, peace with your sisters, peace in short with yourself.

Should you prefer yourself before any of
your sisters, because you think you have
more wit, more capacity, more talents than
she has; you must strangely blind yourself;
for the merits of a Religious do not con-
sist in these qualities, but in the practice of
virtue, & above all of humility. Judge there-
fore of yourself by this rule, & see if you
have nothing to abate of these notions of
superiority, which self love inspires you with,
comparing yourself to your sister. I know
that, if in doing thus, you could think your-
self any thing in comparison to her; or if
you would not rather, notwithstanding all
your fine talents, look upon yourself, as very
much disfigured by your pride & self love, in
the sight of God, who judges all things in
equity & truth. The following truths on this
subject are very solid, & ought to serve you
as a Rule, in the Judgment you make of your-
self, when you put yourself in comparison
with the least of your Sisters. 1. We are only
what we are in the sight of God. 2. God
does not esteem what appears great to the
eyes of men, but only what is estimable in
itself, & he only looks upon solid virtue as
great. 3. Had you all the talents, all the
abilities, all the wit, all the charms capable
to gain the esteem & applause of the whole
world, if you have not a solid piety, ground-
ed upon a sincere humility, you are no-
thing in comparison to the most simple, the
most ignorant, the most awkward of all your
Sisters, who otherwise is humble & truly
valuable. 4. Should you then excell & shine

above the rest by the beauty of your wit, the loftiness of your genius, by your nability in the conduct & management of affairs, by your Wisdom in counselling; should you be esteemed in the Monastery, as one of an universal knowledge, & as a person necessary; should you be courted, loved & consulted by all; should nothing be undertaken without your advice; should you in a word be the grand *Mobile* & very soul, as I may say of your Community; hold it nevertheless for certain, that as much as the most simple of all your sisters surpasses you in virtue, so much are you inferior to her in merit; what ought still to humble you more in comparison of her, is; that every moment you run the risk of losing the little virtue you have, by the danger to which you are exposed of being puffed up with pride, by your talents & praises given to you; whilst the simplicity of this simple Religious, by the humble state her simplicity keeps her in, is in safety & without danger.

CXIV.

Think not that your talents, howsoever great they may be, render you so necessary to the Community, that it can not do without you. Your Monastery subsisted before you was received in it, & will not end, when you shall be no more. There have been many Religious in it, as good, & equal to you in respects; they are dead & gone, & nevertheless the Monastery did not finish with them; how then, when you come to die, will it finish with you. Religion stands in need of people in general to constitute

ake a body ; but it does not stand in need
any person in particular , & each particu-
stands in need of her. How great would
your error , if under pretence of your fine
omplishments you should think yourself
ecessary , & should pretend they ought to
nk so , & to look upon you as the only
port of the Community ? A Religious ,
o should have so foolish an esteem of
self, ought for a month together to meditate
these beautiful words of the Author of the
ration of JESUS-CHRIST : (B. 1. c. 2. n. 3.)
Love to be unknow & esteemed as no-
thing. „

CXV.

A Religious that is truly humble , does not
e to put herself forward , or make her
known , she seeks rather to hide herself ,
as it were to die away unregarded ; as she
persuaded of her nothingness , & sees no
r in herself , she seeks obscurity & won-
s not if she is left in oblivion. She would
k upon thinking herself necessary to the
community , as a ridiculous idea , & much
s would dare say any thing conformable to
h a notion. She makes use of her talents
fulfil her obligations , & the employs
trusted to her , & not to be self-conceited ,
to overtop & out shine her Sisters. How
is she from speaking of her self , from
aking herself a busy body , or from preten-
g to great matters ; from being desirous
sentiment should prevail , from advan-
g it with petulancy & arrogance , as if
was an oracle , from not being able to
ar others dissenting from it ?

Why are we so preoccupied in our
favour, when we have so many motives
humble ourselves? The Saints had low
abject sentiments of themselves; they,
like so many eagles, soared up to heaven
by their eminent piety; the more holy they
were, the more they seemed vile & contempti-
ble in their own eyes; & we, who are
so far from their virtue, we, who far from
lifting ourselves up, as they did, to perfection
scarce are able to crawl in the paths that
lead to it; we that are as yet tied to our
passions, that have not corrected nor mended
ourselves of one single fault; are
blind as to repute ourselves good, & praise
ourselves to others. "O how humbly," concludes
out the Author of the Imitation of Jesus
CHRIST, (B. 3. c. 14. n. 3.) "and lowly ought
I to think of my self! how little ought
I to esteem whatever good I may seem
to have? O how low ought I to cast myself
down, under the bottomless Depth of thy
Judgments, O lord; where I find myself
to be nothing else, but nothing & nothingness
O immense weight! Oh sea, that cannot
be passed over, where I find nothing of
myself but just nothing at all! Where then
can there be any lurking hole, for glorying
in myself? Where any confidence in
conceit of my own virtue? Think then of
thy sins," concludes the same Author
(B. 3. c. 4. n. 2.) "with great compunction
& sorrow, & never esteem thy self to be
any thing for thy good works. Thou
indeed a sinner, subject to & intangled with

many passions : of thy self thou always
 tendest to nothing , thou quickly fallest ,
 thou art quickly overcome , easily distur-
 bed & dissolved : Thou hast not any thing ,
 in which thou canst glory , but many things
 for which thou oughtest to vilify thyself ;
 for thou art much weaker than thou art
 able to comprehend. ,,

CXVII.

Whoever you are in Religion , actual Su-
 perior, or Reverend Mother, distinguished or
 not by your birth , by your good qualities ,
 by your rare merit ; endeavour nevertheless
 to persuade yourself you are the least vir-
 tuous in the Monastery ; or rather consider
 yourself as not having acquired any virtue ,
 whilst the others have made so great a pro-
 gress. In this conviction of mind , which
 ought to be sincere , place yourself always ,
 by your own thoughts, below all your Sisters ,
 even the Novices , renouncing with horror
 all sentiments of preference , should it even
 be in regard of the most imperfect & most
 irregular of the Monastery ; looking upon all
 your Sisters as your Superiors ; & in a word
 despising & contemning yourself in the per-
 son that you are nothing , nay even less
 than worse than nothing ; since nothing never
 pleased almighty God more than you , &
 you have had the misfortune to offend him
 so often. “ If thou hast any thing of good ,,
 says the Author of the Imitation of Jesus-
 CHRIST , (B. I. c. 7. n. 3.) “ believe better
 of things of others , that thou mayst preserve
 humility . It will do thee no harm to esteem
 thy self the worst of all ; but it will hurt

172 THE PERFECT

„ thee very much , to prefer thy self before
 „ any one. „

CXVIII.

You may perhaps say , how can I believe myself more imperfect than the others , when I see many in the Community, whose faults I can but take notice of , & which I do not perceive in myself ? They observe the Rule but very ill , & I endeavour to do it faithfully ; they are quite dissipated , & I keep myself in recollection ; they lose their time in idle discourses , & I always live retired ; they follow in all their own will ; & I am obedient to that of the Superior. They laugh at , criticize, murmur, detract , back-bite one another & I meddle with no body, nor give trouble to any one. Does it not seem, that by thinking my self worse than they , I abandon the truth ? My answer is. 1. True Humility has eyes to see her own faults , & is blind to those of others. 2. She excuses all in others & nothing in herself. She uses a charitable indulgence, when she must give her judgment of another , in order to obtain from God Judgment of mercy ; & on the contrary, she judges herself in all rigour , to prevent the sentence of the Sovereign Judge. 3. When ever faults she perceives in others , she leaves all to the judgment of God , thinking that God alone is the Judge of his creatures , & that it does not belong to us , who only see the exterior , & cannot penetrate the secret recesses of the heart , to do it of ourselves. She discovers in the faults of others , not personal frailty , but the frailty of human nature , which she herself has often had a

experience of, & she is convinced in seeing
 others fall, that if God did not uphold her,
 she should fall much lower. This humbles
 her, & she is far from thinking to prefer
 herself to her neighbour, whose weakness
 makes her sensible of her own, & whose
 faults admonish her to be upon her guard. 5.
 She thinks again in seeing others commit more
 faults than she does, either that self love
 hides her own faults from her, & that she
 does not see what is bad in herself, because
 she is blind to her own misery; or she takes
 care not to think herself better than those
 whose faults she sees fail, because she knows not if she
 will persevere, & apprehends that they who
 seem so imperfect, being reclaimed, may
 one day outstrip her a great deal in virtue,
 making a better use of the graces of God,
 than she herself has done hitherto. In short,
 the very thought of thinking herself better
 than the others, justly alarms her & makes
 her fear lest she should fall into pride & pre-
 sumption, two detestable sins, capable of
 losing in a soul all the virtue she may have
 acquired. Here then are many motives never
 to prefer ones self before any other; & for
 as the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-
 CHRIST says, (B. 1. c. 2. n. 4.) "To have
 no opinion of ourselves, & to think
 always well & commendably of others, is
 a great Wisdom & high perfection. If
 thou should'st see another openly sin, or
 commit some heinous crime; yet thou
 thoughtest not to esteem thy self better,
 because thou knowest not how long thou
 may'st remain in a good state. We are

174 THE PERFECT

„ all frail , but see thou esteem no one more
„ frail than thy self. „

CXIX.

A Religious truly humble finds so much
misery in herself , that she little thinks of oc-
cupying herself with that of others. To think
of the faults of her Sisters , she takes to be
rather an effect of pride , than a true zeal.
Retired within herself , the spirit of con-
punction makes her lament her own faults
without giving her the time , or permitting
her the curiosity to observe those of others.
She ruminates & thinks how to remedy her
own spiritual ills , before she thinks how to
cure those , that do not equally concern her
with her own. What an error would she be
be guilty of , was she to spend her time in
purifying the souls of her Sisters , & forget
her own ! It is not of theirs , but of her
own , she must give an account. So likewise
she is perfectly convinced , whatever zeal she
may possibly have for the sanctification of
others , that charity well ordained ought
this , to begin at home ; & with reason she
suspects that zeal , which pushes her on to
concern herself for the amendment of her
neighbour , & has no ardour or solicitude
for her own. “ Accustom thy self , says the
„ Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST
„ (B. I. c. 14. n. 1.) to turn thy eyes back
„ upon thy self , & see thou judge not the
„ doings of others. In judging others a man
„ labours in vain , often errs , & easily finds
„ but in judging & looking into himself ,
„ always labours with fruit. „

Humiliation is a daughter of humility. It ought not to appear hard or burdensome to Religious; she ought rather to bear it with meekness, with patience, with submission & even with a holy joy. O how happy would a Religious be, was she arrived to such a degree of virtue, as to receive humiliations with joy & gladness! What a progress would she have made in the perfection of her state! How solidly would she be established in humility, & how high might she not raise the edifice of her piety! In consequence of this, she ought to respect the practices of humiliation that are in use in her Monastery, & ought to perform them with a spirit of purity & of a tender devotion. It only appears to them who are ignorant of true virtue, & who have not the least spirit of their own, to despise these practices, which all good Religious ever highly esteemed, & which always were in vigour in regular communities. Thus, humbly to acknowledge or confess ones fault; to receive kneeling the correction of the Superior; to prostrate at the feet of a Sister, whom we had the misfortune to offend: to own sincerely a fault we have committed; to yield in silence when rebuked; not to be forward to justify ourselves, when accused without reason, to suffer a confusion with meekness; are most excellent practices of humiliation, which a Religious never ought to let escape her, when Providence throws them in her way; and of which she ought to profit, with great exactness & fidelity, if she desires to make a progress in a spiritual life.

As the Novices are more commonly tried in Religion, by the practice of humiliations, it is of great consequence to teach them their value & excellence, that they may perform them in the same spirit with which they were first established & ordained. Thus they are to be taught to do them with gravity & modesty; to accompany the exterior actions with a pious disposition of the heart, which consists in interiorly humbling themselves at the time they exteriorly perform them; to confound the pride of their minds, & to mortify their self love, whilst they exteriorly abase & mortify themselves. To propose to themselves the annihilations of JESUS-CHRIST for a model, when in presence of the Community, they in some measure annihilate themselves by their humiliations. A Novice for example, who at the time she confesses her fault to the Superior, or to the Mistress represents to herself in mind, that she is a Magdalen at the feet of our saviour JESUS-CHRIST, & who in this consideration, humbles herself more in her heart, than she does exteriorly; who harkens to the correction given her, as if she received it from JESUS-CHRIST; who in herself owns all she is reproached with; who thinks they do not spare her enough to her; that they spare her too much; that she deserves nothing but confusion, & that whatever rigour they use towards her, they treat her with a too great Indulgence. This Novice, I say, practises humiliation extremely well, she goes the right way to advance in a spiritual life; she will

ke great progress in virtue, if she perfects in the same dispositions.

CXXII.

If we have a difficulty to humble ourselves before others, we have still a much greater to be humbled; it is harder to us to undergo penance that a Superior imposes on us, with a view to humble us, than to do it when we have beg'd it of her for our humiliation; I should set a greater value on the virtue of a Novice, who with a great meekness receives the sharp reprehension of her Mistress, than upon the fervour of another, that asks her Mistress leave to do some act of humility in the Refectory, tho' she is highly commendable, & can not be too much exhorted to do it often. The reason of this is, that in humiliations that are of our own choice come from ourselves, self-love may find a way to nourish & favour it self, in the praises we receive from others; whereas, when we are humbled, there's no hopes left of self-love for any commendation; on the contrary, it seems as if every one sought nothing else but to confound & pull it down; this makes those humiliations so hard to be endured with; this sometimes touches our self so sensibly, & in short disconcerts it in many occasions to such a degree, that it flies off the mask, flies into lively impatience, & appears in it's own shape such as it is.

CXXIII.

If you overcome a too great sensibility; you will triumph over one of the greatest enemies of the peace of your soul; & I dare

178 THE PERFECT

almost say your tranquillity will be unchangeable. But to triumph over this enemy, so strongly radicated in ourselves, how long must we have laboured, & how much gained over ourselves ! We can never even subdue it so entirely, as not to stand in need of being upon our guard ; because when we flatter ourselves to have overcome it, it then recovers & surprises us so suddenly, that at the first attack, we are almost overthrown & defeated. You have bore with a great deal of patience, for a certain time, some injurious harsh words ; you have never replied nor answered any thing, as often as they were repeated ; nevertheless, you was not without feeling them to the quick ; it is owing to your virtue you knew how to hold your tongue ; but do not confide too much in yourself ; be always the more on the watch, for it may happen, when you think the least of it, you may not be disposed to keep silence ; you will let a word fall, then two, & you will perhaps be so transported with Passion & Anger, as never to have been so all your life.

CXXIV.

Are you desirous to become more patient ? take for a considerable time the Passion of our Saviour JESUS-CHRIST, for the subject of your Meditations. In searching into this divine Mystery by serious & reiterated reflections, you will feel yourself touched, & you will with a much less difficulty resolve to suffer all that can be said or done to you howsoever difficult : say often to yourself that you deserve nothing but contempt & all sort of bad treatment ; & say it so often, either

considering what the innocent JESUS suffered,
reproaching yourself with your own faults,
that this truth at length may be imprinted in
your heart, & you may be fully convinced of
it. Lord, says the devout soul in the book of
Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST (B. 3. c. 41.
.) "Lord if I look well into my self, never
was any injury done me by any creature,
and therefore I cannot justly complain of
thee: for because I have often & grie-
vously sinned against thee, all creatures
have reason to take arms against me. To
me therefore confusion & contempt is
justly due, but to thee praise, honour,
& glory. „

CXXV.

Never consider the contradiction in it self,
nor the person it comes from, if you have
mind to keep yourself in an humble pa-
tience; but raise your thoughts up to God,
and to obtain from his mercy the strength
you stand in need of, or to adore his pro-
vidence & own he permits what happens
to you to try your virtue, & thereby to pre-
pare & lay up a treasure of merit for you.
As long as you have a regard to creatures, in
that happens to you hard & contradictory,
you will be easily moved; your pride & your
love will rise up to a very high degree;
you will doubly feel the pain, & perhaps
& you will be so irritated as to scandalize your-
selves greatly. What boldness has she, pride
to say to you, to speak thus to me; & who
has she to give herself such airs? Does it be-
come her to affront me as she does? How
many things might I not reproach her with,

180 THE PERFECT

if I was not more reasonable, & had more discretion than she has? Self-love further add: must one always suffer? The more one is good, the more, it seems one is exposed to the capricious bad humours of others: who can indure it so long? Is not better to put an end to their importunities, by returning them with a vivacity that shews one is not insensible? If they are permitted to go on, they will thereby grow hardy & insupportable, & will never leave off. Let us therefore shew them once for all we will no longer be their fool. Such is the language of pride & self-love. But hark ye to that of the spirit of JESUS - CHRIST, that he speaks to you by the Author of the Book of the Imitation; [B. 3. c. 19. n. 2.] "Do you say I can not take these things from me, a man, & things of this kind are not to be suffered by me, for he has done me a great injury, & he upbraids me with things I never thought on; but I will suffer willingly from another, & as far as I shall judge fitting for me to suffer. Such a thought is foolish which considers not the virtue of patience, nor by whom it shall be crowned; but rather weighs the persons, & offences committed."

CXXVI.

You ought not to content yourself with saying nothing in the occasions in which patience is put to the trial; but you ought likewise to endeavour to soften & appease your mind & heart; your mind, in not voluntarily harbouring any thoughts of what has been done against you, & your heart, by endeavouring

vouring to calm it's emotions. If you fol-
 low your reflections, & nourish your resent-
 ment; besides the interior faults you will fall
 into, & which will be almost without end,
 you will fly out on the first occasion, tho'
 ever so slight, because you will be dis-
 posed to be angry, & scarce can a word be
 said to you, but you will give a full vent to
 your vivacity. " Put out of thy heart, says
 the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST,
 3. c. 57. n. 2.) " the best thou canst, all
 the impression any harm done to thee can
 possibly make, " & if it has touched thee, yet
 let it not cast thee down, nor keep thee
 a long time entangled. At least bear it
 patiently, if thou canst not receive it with
 joy. And, tho' thou be not willing to bear,
 & hear what is said against thee, & per-
 ceivest an indignation arising within thy
 self, yet repress thy self, and suffer no
 inordinate word to come out of thy mouth
 which may scandalize the weak. This com-
 motion which is stirred up in thee, will
 quickly be allayed, & thy inward pain will
 be sweetened by the return of grace,

CXXVII.

Did you seriously consider what gives you
 much pain in Religion, you would find
 it is nothing often but a trifle; & you are
 touched to the quick, only because you are
 so sensible. Sometimes it is a word indis-
 creetly dropt, which you ought not to have
 taken notice of; & at which no one but
 yourself would have been concern'd. Some-
 times 'tis a story you would have done bet-
 ter not to have listen'd to, & in which by

exaggerations they magnified the objects whilst at the bottom it was little or nothing. Sometimes it is a repulse given you by a Sister, which you did not expect, but which a small share of humility would have made you bear without bitterness. Another time short it is the admonition of a Superior, or cold reception from her, at which your delicacy is offended. These, & the like, are frequently in Religion the cause of affliction, pet & chagrin in a Religious woman, who is too sensible. To judge by her former & trouble, by her complaints & tears one might think that all manner of Ills & storms were heaped & multiplied on her head. Would she, alas! compare what she suffers, not only with what JESUS-CHRIST, the Saints have suffered, but also with what an infinity of people suffer in the world, even they, who seem to enjoy all the advantages & sweets of life; O! how soon would she find herself in the wrong to be so sensible & how soon convinced that all her pains do not merit the attention, I could almost say of a person ever so little reasonable. But we are only touched at the Ills we feel, & however little they are, we are so sensible to every thing that gives us the least pain, that it seems, as if there was nothing so hard to bear, & that our cross is the heaviest of all. The cause of this is; because we will not own that we deserve to suffer more than what we do, & in a word because we are not humble.

CXXVIII.

Meekness is the daughter of humility, haughtiness, arrogance, peevishness, &c.

h & impatience are the offsprings of pride. This is one of the principal virtues that most becomes Religious; since living in Community, they who fail in it, become insupportable to others & to themselves. How many motives engage you to labour at the acquiring this virtue, if you have it not? The example of JESUS-CHRIST; what you owe to your Sisters; the tranquillity of the Monastery; your own ease; all invite & inspire you to practise it faithfully. 1°. The example of JESUS-CHRIST; he compares himself sometimes to a shepherd; sometimes to a lamb; sometimes to a father; sometimes to a ten-pi piece; sometimes to a hen gathering chickens under her wings; so many symbols that most admirably express his incomparable meekness. But among all the admirable instructions he gives us, he tells us in particular to learn of him to be meek & humble of heart. Behold in what manner true humility & meekness are strictly united; these are the two virtues, which, we may say, JESUS-CHRIST is extremely desirous, we should learn of him; & should we fail of doing it, by what mark will he know us for his disciples; & what can a Religious copy from this divine model that is more suitable to her state? 2°. What she owes to her Sisters; for how has she a mind to live with them; & how can she expect they should be meek in her regard, if she is not herself so to them? Is it then to exercise their patience, & to make them suffer on all occasions the sallies of her bad humour, that she becomes their Sister, & their companion?

184 THE PERFECT

Setting piety aside, where would be her common Equity? It might be justly said to her: what right do you pretend to be born with, you, who cannot bear any thing? Dont you rather deserve to be treated, as you treat others? To be dealt roughly with, to be displeased, to be spoke to with heat & emotion, since you know not how to do otherwise yourself? Do justice to your Sisters; you are not more than they in Religion. Do justice to yourself; you have no reason to complain if they spare you not, since you use so little reserve towards them. 3°. What a Religious owes to her Monastery; for were all like her; was every one to abandon herself to her vivacity; what a Chaos, what disorder & confusion; & who would live in it for one single moment! On the contrary, what comfort is it to live with persons of a meek character, with whom one lives in peace & an admirable union, who are incapable of saying any thing disobliging, who are always affable, preventing, easy & of an equal temper. 4°. O how advantageous then must meekness be to a Religious, who thereby imitates JESUS-CHRIST, & is so mild & agreeable in her conversation to her Sisters that makes her the happiness of her Community; since the greatest happiness of Monasteries consists in living in peace with God & in peace with one another, & meekness brings forth & nourishes this happy peace & union. Would to God, every Religious would seriously purpose to practise this virtue of meekness in all it's perfection! Would to God, every one kept so strict a guard upon

self, as to let nothing escape, contrary to
 virtue ! It would be a sure means to main-
 tain, with a strict union, the most exact regular
 servance in a Monastery ; as it is the defect
 or want of meekness, that oftentimes enkindles
 the fire of discord, & brings in the spirit of
 division, disorder & relaxation. Hear the
 Prologue, the Author of the Imitation of
 CHRIST gives to meekness & patience,
 see what great benefit you deprive your-
 self of, by not practising these two most ex-
 cellent virtues. " He who best knows how to
 suffer with meekness & patience", says he,
 (2. c. 3. n. 3.) will enjoy most peace.
 Such a one is a conqueror of himself, & lord
 of the world ; a friend of CHRIST, & heir of
 heaven.

CXXIX.

Some tempers, it is true, are more easy to
 be moved, & others are so peaceable, that
 nothing can excite them to impatience. The
 former have great difficulty to keep themselves
 within due bounds, on certain occasions ; but the
 latter Religious of this character are suscep-
 tible of emotion, the more they ought to be
 on their guard against their fiery temper, &
 to fore-arm themselves, not to fly out so
 easily in the critical occasions. These Reli-
 gious ought to prepare themselves against
 them, by fancying themselves in time of their
 prayer, as actually in them, & by endeavou-
 ring to stir up within themselves, sentiments
 of patience & meekness. They ought not, in
 their own particular, entertain themselves with
 the thoughts of what has happen'd to them
 contradictory, nor of what has been said disa-

186 THE PERFECT

greeable, or done to offend them. They ought with promptitude, to repress all their thoughts as a dangerous temptation, & only nourish in themselves sentiments of humility, charity, patience & meekness. They ought to accustom themselves never to speak to any one whatever, but with an extreme mildness, in order to acquire the habit of this amiable virtue, & to be the better disposed to practise it, in those occasions where it is necessary. They ought never to pardon themselves any vivacity, how soever slight; but to punish themselves immediately, either by imposing on themselves some penance, according to the advice of their Director, or by excusing themselves, & asking pardon in case they have, by their impatience, offended any of their Sisters. What we here propose, is in reality, a little hard & difficult to a person naturally cholerick & impatient. But she ought not to flatter herself, that it will cost her no pains & violence to correct herself, nor that she will succeed in a short time. Would to God, after three or four years labour, she acquired so much meekness as to be able to moderate herself without difficulty, but by faithfully following what we have said, & by begging of almighty God, with fervor & perseverance, that he would vouchsafe to change her temper; she will by degrees become as meek as any one, & will have the comfort to have triumph'd over one of the most dangerous enemies of the peace of her soul, & of the tranquillity of her Monastery. As to those Religious who are naturally meek, they ought to practise meekness

to out of a principle of piety. They ought
 to content themselves with having a natu-
 ral meek temper. They must aim at something
 better, and improve this natural meekness, in
 order to advance in virtue, since they ought
 to work & labour for an eternal bliss & glory.
 They must bear with patience those who
 are of a contrary humour to their own, &
 excuse in them, for the love of JESUS-CHRIST,
 the sudden transports they fly into; let them
 take great care not to prefer themselves be-
 fore them; but rather let them think, that if
 their Sisters have not patience on some occa-
 sions, they use violence to themselves in an
 infinity of others, tho' it costs them a great
 deal; & that if they themselves had as quick
 a temper; they perhaps would not contain
 themselves on any occasion at all. Thus the
 religious, naturally inclined to anger, endea-
 vouring to moderate themselves; & the
 others more mild, excusing in them, the
 faults they fall into; all approach to one
 another, & unite together by patience &
 charity, & thus a good harmony is preserved
 kept up in the Monastery.

CXXX.

Let us harken to the excellent instructions
 which the pious Author, we cite so often,
 gives us upon what we have been saying. We
 may say nothing better, & his words have
 the sanction, which it is not easy for every
 one to attain like him, because he had truly
 the spirit of meekness, & of the charity of
 our Lord JESUS-CHRIST. "If thou wilt be
 born with all, says he, (B. 2. c. 3. n. 2.
 & 3.) bear also with another: see how say

188 THE PERFECT

„ thou art yet from true charity & humility
 „ which knows not how to be angry with
 „ any one but ones self. It is no great thing
 „ to be able to converse with them that are
 „ good & meek ; for this naturally is pleasing
 „ to all ; & every one would willingly have
 „ peace , & loves those best that agree with
 „ him. „ [Remark here by the way the
 advantages of meekness , & how necessary it
 is for the well being of Communities] “ But
 pursues our Author , “ to be able to live
 „ peaceably , with those that are harsh & pe-
 „ verse , or disorderly , or such as thwart us ,
 „ is a great grace , & a highly commendable
 „ & manly exploit. Some there are that keep
 „ themselves in peace , & have peace also
 „ with others. And there are some , that nei-
 „ ther are at peace in themselves , nor suf-
 „ fer others to be in peace ; they are trou-
 „ blesome to others , but always more trou-
 „ blesome to themselves. And some there
 „ are , who keep themselves in peace , &
 „ labour to bring others to peace ; yet all
 „ our peace , in this miserable life , is rather
 „ to be placed in humble suffering , than in
 „ not feeling adversities. „ Tho’ this passage
 we have copied be something long , it is
 much shorter & more precise , than the sense
 of the instructions it contains , for the well-
 fare of Religious Communities. The fund of
 these instructions is almost immense , & each
 period furnishes matter to many reflections.
 Take notice of what he says of those per-
 sons , who have meekness in part , & how
 he gives us to understand what a comfort it is
 to live with such in a Community ; which

RELIGIOUS. 189

shews the advantages of meekness, & ought
 one to be sufficient to excite all Religious,
 to acquire & practise this amiable virtue.
 Observe what he says of those who are harsh,
 & disorderly, of those who are of a
 swarming, contradicting temper; of those
 who can never speak without offending,
 without shewing their peevish humour; of
 those in short, who have neither peace with
 themselves, nor peace with others: how
 hard & difficult it is to live with them, &
 how great virtue is necessary & requisite to
 bear them. And this alone ought to be
 enough to inspire the Religious, who are of
 this temper, to be most assiduous and fervent
 in their prayers to God, & to use all their care
 to overcome & amend themselves. You then
 who read this, be, by your goodness, as a
 lamb in the Monastery; there is nothing so
 amiable as the meekness of a lamb; yours
 will gain you the affection, the friendship,
 & say still more, the respect & veneration of
 your Sisters. Be an Angel of peace among
 them; possess yourself by your meekness, &
 give by it's means, to procure & entertain
 the peace of others. Let all draw & learn
 lessons of meekness from your counsels, from
 your advice, from your reflections; let your
 example excite them to reduce & put them
 to practice. But you who want meekness,
 detest in yourself this defect; & detest it so
 thoroughly as to remedy it efficaciously. Ob-
 serve & reflect on it's fatal consequences.
 Would you be in the Monastery as a Bear
 in it's Den, to whom no one can approach
 without danger? Would you be the scourge

of your Sisters, their cross, the continual as well as most painful trial & exercise of their patience? How can you support yourself in this waspish humour? What comfort does it give you? What merit before God, what honour before others, what profit to yourself? I cannot too much insist on this point, & would to God, what I say might make known the excellence of meekness, in the extremities of the world; it would, as vast as it is, become like a house of peace & all nations like a family the best regulated & the most united. What will it not then be, when it reigns in a Community of the Spouses of JESUS-CHRIST.

CXXXI.

The Religious, who are charged with different employs, ought more than any others to apply themselves to the practice of meekness: because as those employs are given them only for the utility of their Sisters, they would correspond very ill to the designs of Providence, & to the views of their Superiors, were they to render themselves troublesome to the particular Religious, by their peevish bad humour. The more their office obliges them to provide for the different necessities of their Sisters; the more also would they give them occasion to murmur, to complain, & to many other sins, of which they become responsible to almighty God. And what indiscretion would it not be in you, if all the sisters being obliged to have recourse to your charity, no one of them should find any in you, & could not approach you without exposing themselves to be ill received.

to have some waspish answer, some de-
 al, some dry ways, some sour, offensive
 words? Remember that as soon as you are
 in any office of the Monastery, you no
 longer belong to yourself, but to others.
 It is not given you to do you any honour,
 or to please you, nor to distinguish you
 from the others; but meerly for the utility
 of service of your Sisters; & if you want
 meekness in the discharge of it, should
 you otherwise take all imaginable care to
 acquit yourself well of it, should you give
 yourself all possible pains in it; they ha-
 ve a right to make no account of, nor to
 thank you for your care, pains, or service;
 they only feel the effects thereof, in
 being obliged to bear with your haughtiness
 & impatience; which discredits your servi-
 ce, and renders it more disagreeable than
 useful.

CXXXII.

You have a difficult office, or a multipli-
 city of occupations; you stand therefore in
 more need than another, of being upon your
 guard against all impatience, & of laying in
 stock of meekness. If when most taken up
 with what concerns your office, in regulating,
 or example, your accounts; a Religious
 comes & interrupts you for a thing of no
 consequence; if when you have toiled & al-
 most exhausted yourself in ironing, for
 example, all day shifts, or kerchiefs; it is
 thought you have not work'd enough; if
 when you have given all your attention to
 acquit yourself of your employ as you ought,
 which is to mend the habits, you hear a

192 THE PERFECT

Sister murmuring at hers ; I fear very much least you should on your part, fly out. Keep yourself then on your guard. If there are occasions in Religion , in which we ought to make appear we have some virtue ; these are precisely them , because they grievously hurt self-love ; the heart is attacked in the most sensible part , & they are the most frequent. Feeling then your heart agitated & in commotion , & ready to break out into some impatience , elevate yourself interiorly to God , & take care not to say one single word ; for undoubtedly you will go farther humble yourself , and at least impose silence on yourself , & stifle as much as you can within you all resentment , which the murmurs & indiscretion of others may have raised in your breast ; endeavour even to blot out of your memory the very thought of it ; least they should renew the sentiments of bitterness in your heart , & with their complaints & angry words.

CXXXIII.

The more your employ extends it self to the different wants of your Sisters , the more also ought you to be polite , affable , preventing , & to render yourself more officious & serviceable. The dependance we live in in Religion , is not without being heavy & burdensome to nature. So , as particular Religious are in some measure dependant on you , thro' the necessity they are in of having recourse to you , you ought to remember it is a burden to them , considering self-love & that it is their virtue only that enables them to carry it with submission. You ought there

RELIGIOUS. 193

to make it easy to them, & assist their
 true by your obliging manners. You ought
 ways to be ready to render them the ser-
 vice they ask of you, within the limits of your
 power, provided what they ask is not contrary
 to obedience & good order. But if it is
 impossible for you to grant what they desire,
 do not refuse them with sourness & tart
 answers, but excuse yourself in a manner so
 mild & so charitable, that they may feel no
 pain by your refusal, & rather be as much
 pleased with your good will, as if you had
 granted what they desired.

CXXXIV.

Some Religious, it is true, are so hard &
 difficult to content, that one knows not which
 way to hinder them from complaining.
 Their delicacy is extreme; they will have
 so much after their own will, & are so
 full of fancies, that whatever care is taken
 to serve them, they always find fault; one
 is never done enough; one has never done
 all enough. These unquiet minds are, as
 may be said, the scourge of all those, who
 are in office; all feel their capriciousness,
 from the Superior down to the Lay-Sister in
 the kitchen. I would very willingly ask them,
 if you did you enter into Religion, you will be
 very well served and waited upon? Was it
 to be satisfied in all things, & always at the
 expense of the tranquillity of others? For you
 are truly an occasion of scandal to them; &
 you must either commit a great many faults,
 on the occasions you give them; or they
 must use a continual violence to themselves,
 to often a very great one, to bear with all

R

194 THE PERFECT

your unreasonable complaints & perpetual murmurs. But to you who are in office, also say, have compassion on these weak heads, bear with them for the love of **JESUS CHRIST**. I see how great indiscretion they are guilty of, thus to exercise your patience by their delicacy & niceness; but God permits it to try your virtue, & to give you the means of making more frequent acts of charity: and as there is nothing in them that can induce you to it, the mildness you use in their regard, will be purged from all human considerations; you will reap all the merit yourselves; & God, who will have the glory of it, will be one day your recompence.

CXXXV.

The Lay-Sisters have a great necessity of humility, patience & meekness in their employs that are laborious & painful; in which they are devoted to the service of their Sisters, & exposed by consequence more than others, to bear with the peevish humours of capricious minds, or with the great delicacy of unquiet spirits, who let them enjoy but little quiet & leisure to attend to themselves. O if in these occasions, which daily happen in many Monasteries, the good Sisters knew how to preserve an evenness of temper in the peace of their hearts & to always shew a meek & serene countenance, how inestimable would their virtue be! I prefer it to raptures and ecstasies. If there are any Monasteries, where these Sisters have more work indeed to do, & less time to repose themselves, than they would have in the world, I will not in any manner take

RELIGIOUS. 195

don me to excuse the Superiors, who over-
had them so indiscreetly; since it neither is
for the good of the Monastery in general,
nor for the benefit of the particulars.
As to these Sisters, if they know how
bear their pains with a spirit of meek-
ness, so far from finding in them an obsta-
cle to their sanctification, they will more
securely bring them to it; because. 1°. They
are certain of doing the will of God in their
employs, when obedience puts them in them.
2°. The more their work is laborious & pain-
ful, the more they have the means of satisfying
mighty God for their sins, of sacrificing
themselves to his good will, & of growing
in virtue & merit. 3°. JESUS-CHRIST looks
upon as done to himself, what they do for
their Sisters; so when they serve them in
any thing, they ought to consider, that ser-
ving the Spouses of JESUS-CHRIST, this di-
vine Master accepts of their service as done
to himself: but they must refrain from all
complaints, all murmurs, from all fallis of
amour, from all impatience. They must
among themselves help & assist one another
with charity, without disputing, without jea-
lousy, without seeking to throw upon others
what is most laborious & difficult. They must
be equally ready to serve all the Sisters without
distinction or preference, which is a most
essential point. They must love them all,
esteem them all, respect them all, & en-
deavour to do their best to content them all.
They must do purely for God what they do;
they must often in the day make an offering
of it to him with love & an affectionate de-

196 THE PERFECT

votion ; & in time of their work raise their hearts frequently to him , least their inferior occupations should distract them much , & make them lose the spirit of collection. They must in short, esteem & love their state & condition , & acquit themselves of their duties with a holy joy , preferring with the Royal Prophet , to be abject & hold the last rank in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the Tabernacles of sinners for we may truly so call the habitations of the children of the world , where iniquity often abounds & overflows.

CXXXVI.

The Author of the Imitation of **JESUS CHRIST** , gives us four important counsels. The three first of them belong to meekness since they teach us always to yield to others which a meek mind perfectly knows how to do. “ Endeavour , says he , [B. 3. c. 23. n. 3.] , rather to do the will of another than of your own. Ever choose rather to have less than more ; always seek the lowest place & be inferior to every one. , These three points well practised , would be sufficient to render the peace of Monasteries perpetual & constant. O did every Religious renounce her own will , to conform herself to that of others ; did every Religious voluntarily give up her own interest for that of others ; did every Religious esteem herself less than others , & in this conviction had nothing but a respect , esteem , & deference for others should we see so many factions , divisions , quarrels , aversions in Monasteries ? All these evils would be banished ; nothing but peace

tranquillity, contentment, innocent joy, cordiality & affability would appear. They could be habitations in which God would dwell with pleasure, & would visibly shower down his blessings upon them. Give me meek minds, & the Monasteries will enjoy these excellent priviledges.

CXXXVII.

You ought always to submit your own judgment to that of others, & renounce your opinion to accede to theirs, as long as your conscience is not hurt. Should you do otherwise, you would want meekness and humility. Why would you dispute? What advantage will it be, when it is about an indifferent thing? Should your opinion even be the better, if the glory of God is not interested in it's being preferred, be glad to make a sacrifice of it for the good of peace. A meek spirit knows not to do otherwise; & I would give you such, for your own tranquillity, & that of others. Harken to the admirable instructions of the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, on this subject. "It is true, says he, (B. 1. c. 9. n. 2.) every one willingly is for doing according to his own liking, & is more inclined to such as are of his own mind; but if God be among us, we must sometimes quit our own way of thinking, for the good of peace. Who is so wise, as to be able fully to know all things? Therefore trust not too much to thy own thoughts, but be willing also to hear the sentiments of others. If thy thinking be good, & yet for God's sake thou

198 THE PERFECT

„ leavest it to follow another , it will be
more profitable to thee „

CXXXVIII.

You never ought to take amiss , if others are of a different sentiment from yours , whether you are assembled with the Community in Chapter , to deliberate upon the affairs of the Monastery , or whether you are only in conversation , about things of little importance. Be always diffident of your own opinion , because it is your own. If you are sincerely humble , you will not think otherwise. Do not affect to propose your opinion with an air of authority , or of confidence in yourself ; but do it always with a great deal of modesty ; say not with a decisive Tone : *you must do this ; you must go about it in such a manner ; such is my opinion.* But rather say with a religious modesty , *methinks this ought to be so ; it seems to me in my humble opinion this affair should be done in such a manner.* This way of expressing yourself is more agreeable to your state , & according to the exact rules of humility & meekness ; the other favours too much of self-love & of self-conceit in one's own thoughts. Moreover , if you have any credit in the Monastery , either by your age , by your talents , or by your office. Think not that this authorizes you to oblige the others to think with you. Leave them their full liberty to give their sentiment ; & if it is contrary to yours , do not take it ill of them , nor shew them you are offended & displeased. You ought still to take a greater care not to despise their opinion , not to make it odious , nor to appear ridiculous ; this

ould be exercising over your Sisters a power,
 at may be called, not a little tyrannical.

CXXXIX.

Obstinacy is a vice very unbecoming a
 religious ; if you are guilty of this odious
 defect, I pity you ; but I pity still more those
 who live with you. Your sentiment either
 appears to you better than that of others,
 or it does not ? If it does not, why are you
 obstinate as to insist upon it ? It is the
 sign of an indocile spirit, full of it self, and
 enemy of all society. If you think it is bet-
 ter, it is still better for you to sacrifice it to
 the peace of your Sisters, & to the charity
 you owe them. “ It may happen, says the
 Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST,
 (B. 1. c. 9. n. 3.) that each one’s thoughts
 may be good : but to refuse to yield
 to others, when reason, or a just cause
 requires it, is a sign of pride & wilfulness. ,
 be not then inflexible in what you may have
 once advanced ; hear the reasons of all ; re-
 spect their opinion, if they are your Supe-
 riors or equals ; give your attention to them
 with meekness & goodness ; if they are your
 inferiors, either on account of age, or of your
 office ; yield willingly, when reason or cha-
 rity requires it ; but yield thro’ virtue & Re-
 ligion. Do not imitate those, who in reality
 have off disputing ; but who by some unguar-
 anted word, by some feigned modesty, or dis-
 simulous look, give others to understand they
 only yield thro’ complaisance, & for the good
 of peace, & that otherwise they contemn &
 despise their opinion ; for all that is nothing
 but an artifice of pride ; it is self-love that

200 THE PERFECT

vigorouslŷ defends it ſelf in it's retreat, & does almoſt as much harm, as if it openlŷ attack'd, and in front.

CXL.

A Religious of a contradicting ſpirit is like an apple of diſcord, thrown by the enemy of our ſalvation among the Siſters. O how much a Community is to be pitied, when ſuch of ſuch a character are to be found in it. You who know yourſelf guilty of this defect, why don't you ſtay alone, if you will correct yourſelf? A wild foreſt would be more fit for you than a Monastery; or if it would not be more fit for you, it would be more advantageous for thoſe who live with you. There are Religious of whom it may be ſaid, that a Monastery is good for them, but that they are not good for the Monastery; that is to ſay, they would be elſe where worſe than in a Cloiſter; but that they have therein, with ſo little charity & peace, that they are a common nuisance & trouble to others. If this can be applied to any one, it is principally to a Religious of a thwarting, contradicting temper. It would be a happineſs for a Community, if ſhe would deprive herſelf of the company of others; but theſe quiet ſpirits are preciſely thoſe, who muſt be every where, who thruſt their noſe into every thing, interfere with all, & find fault with all. They will never ſay to a Siſter, ſhe is in the right; or that ſhe has done ſuch a thing well; they only know to contradict whatever is done, whatever is ſaid. Unhappy is that particular Religious whom a perſon of a contradicting ſpirit attempts to attack.

is obsessed by her, & must have an extraordinary strength of mind, & a heart extremely good, to bear with patience her contradictions, which are almost without end. you, who are the scourge of others; what delicious pleasure can you have in making them suffer; or rather what evil spirit pushes you on to tire out their patience? Were all of you in the Monastery, it would be nothing, but an assembly of furious persons, mutually tearing one another to pieces; for the continual vexation of a contradicting spirit, soon replaces patience with one of the same sort, excites anger, & inkindles at length a reciprocal animosity & fury. If it does not happen to you, it is because your Sisters have virtue & patience, above your malice; but you are not for that less bad, & it is not your fault if you are not a great subject of scandal to them.

CXL.

It is not a contradicting spirit only, that makes others suffer in a Monastery; it is sometimes a Religious, good enough otherwise, if you will, but not without her defects, amongst which we may principally reckon a lowness of wit, joined to an unquiet, restless temper, that carries her rather to consider the faults of others, than her own; to take notice of the least, to be formalized in all, to find harm in all, to obsess a Superior continually with her complaints, against one or the other; so that if she is heard to, & her sentiment followed; a Superior would be always necessitated to reprehend, to give orders, to mortify, to enjoin

penances, to vex in fine & trouble her subjects. We do not here pretend to condemn the zeal of certain pious, sensible Religious who seeing abuses introduced without the knowledge of the Superior, admonish & reprove her of them, to keep up regular observance & to screen their consciences from all the just reproaches they would deserve, were they to be silent & hold their tongue. Had we this in view, we should openly authorize the bad conduct of the relaxed Religious who are too apt to accuse their Sisters, who give intelligence to their Superior, of false zeal, & look upon them as good for nothing else but to disturb the peace. No, we do not speak of them, & so far from condemning we praise their conduct. But we speak of those low minds, who see nothing in their Sisters but faults; who heighten the most trivial ones, & will have others perfect, without labouring to become so themselves; who would be vexed perhaps to see their Sisters without any imperfections, because they could no longer follow the bent & inclination they have to criticise & murmur. You who are in the case, give ear to the just remonstrances, which the charitable Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST gives you to make a good use of it, for your own tranquillity & that of others. " Endeavour, says he, [B. 1. c. 16. n. 2.] to be patient in supporting others defects & infirmities, of what kind soever; because thou also hast many things, which others must bear with all. If thou canst not make thy self such one as thou wouldst, how canst thou

pect to have another according to thy liking? We would willingly have others perfect, & yet we mend not our own defects. We would have others strictly corrected, but are not willing to be corrected ourselves. The large liberty of others displeases us, & yet we would not be denied any thing that we ask for. We are willing that others should be bound up by laws; & we suffer not ourselves by any means to be restrained. Thus it is evident how seldom we weigh our neighbour, in the same ballance with ourselves. If all were perfect, what should we have then to suffer from others, for God's sake. But now God has so disposed things, that we may learn to *bear one anothers burden.* (Gal. 6. v. 2.) „

CXLII.

We cannot too much exhort all Religious; to reflect maturely on these words of Saint Paul, which we have cited with the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST. We shall never be tired in repeating to them this law of love, which JESUS-CHRIST has made known to us, by the mouth of his Apostle: *Let ye one anothers burdens.* This truly is that seems most difficult in Religion; but it seems so in proportion to our want of familiarity, patience & charity. You come to a Monastery, where there are people of different countries, of different families, different conditions, different characters. It is not therefore flesh & blood that ties you together; it is not a natural attractive & inclination that unites you; but it is patience

204 THE PERFECT

in mutually bearing each others defects, & charity that must form & cement your union. Shut here your ears to self-love, & all natural repugnancy; consult only what **JESUS CHRIST** ordains you, & what he demands of you as a proof of your fidelity to him, & as pledge of the love you owe him. Consider in the first place, that it is he that demands it, & that this ought to make you surmount all the pains & difficulties you may possibly have: consider in the second place, that your own interest obliges you to it; for you will not suffer any thing from others if you will not bear with their humours, their faults, their imperfections; you have no right to expect they should bear with you; & nevertheless you ought to think you are not without faults, no more than your Sisters, unless self-love blinds you in your own regard; you ought even to be persuaded that your Sisters have more to excuse in you than you can find occasion of exercising your patience towards them; & if you do not perceive it, it is because you do not sufficiently know yourself. O were these truths deeply engraved in your heart; how easily would you bear with your Sisters! How happy would you think yourself to be with them! Such are the effects of humility & of charity. These two virtues smoothe the greatest difficulties of the Cloister, that proceed from the diversity of minds; & change into sweetness, what seemed a subject of bitterness & aversion; but which only appears such, inasmuch as we are too much prevented in our own favour, & love ourselves too well.

O charity favourite virtue of JESUS-CHRIST, which flows from his sacred heart ; you at this divine Master so expressly , & with much energy & instance recommends to ; you that he has assigned as a mark to show his Disciples by. O lovely virtue ! virtue so worthy of the holy Spouses of the holy of Holies : you are not only the bond of Religious Communities ; but it is you that unites them together & forms them ; it is you that are their firm & unshaken foundation , & their strongest support. What is a Monastery without you , but a house of division & discord ; but a tumultuous collection of people , without peace , without concord , without friendship , without order ; in the midst of whom the devil dwells , & who are odious & hateful to the eyes of God , & of his Saints ? But a Monastery , in which you reign , is a habitation , where JESUS-CHRIST takes his delight in the midst of his sacred Spouses ; a mansion of terrestrial Angels , who by the means of your chaste delights , enjoy a foretaste of those inconceivable pleasures , wherewith the inhabitants of the Celestial Jerusalem will be for ever inebriated. O how happy the Religious are , when they live in a Monastery , where charity has , & enjoys all its advantages ! How much are they to be prized in a Community , from which charity is banish'd ? What a number of sins are committed in a Religious house , where charity is more ? What virtues are not practised by the means of charity , when it is well established ? Figure to yourself a Community ,

where charity reigns ; it is by charity, that Superior commands with meekness, with goodness, with the tenderness of a mother ; it is by charity, that the Inferiors obey her with respect, with humility, with exactness, with eagerness, with love. The burden of Superiority, so heavy of it self, becomes sweet & light, & even comfortable, when charity governs. The yoke of obedience is all pleasure & comfort, easy to carry, & even amiable, when charity is governed. All is comfortable, all delightful, all ravishing, where lovely & charming charity reigns.

CXLIV.

Who then can resist the attraction & charms of charity ? Who would in it's place substitute hatred, discord, animosities, disputes, quarrels, troubles, detraction, calumny, murmuring, parties, divisions ? Alas ! You, who read this, spare nothing to prefer this virtue amongst you : rather than lose, cool it's fervour, sacrifice all points of honour, all conveniences, all rights, all prerogatives, all self-interest. Charity is infinitely preferable to all these things ; it is much more to be sought after for your tranquillity, & for your salvation, than all the advantages of this world. If the first office of your Monastery was in question ; an employment you covet or desire the most ; a chamber you would choose, that suits your convenience the best ; or any other place of honour, or ease, what would it all be, if you obtained it at the expence of charity, but vanity & affliction of mind ? But charity alone is sufficient for the true advantage of your soul ; because

with it, you possess the heart of JESUS-CHRIST,
 & in his heart you will find your salvation.

CXLV.

To say of a Monastery ; there are two
 parties in it, signifies, that charity is very
 often hurt & injured in it ; for minds divided
 in sentiments, are seldom united together, by
 the ties of Christian affection. We some-
 times, it is true, cover ourselves with the
 cloak of zeal ; & every one of each party
 makes the common good, & the preserva-
 tion of regular observance for a pretext. But,
 O God ! how cunning is self-love, & how well
 it knows to hide it's steps, the better to arrive
 at it's ends ! The intentions are so rarely
 bright in this difference of sentiments, that
 we may generally affirm, that parties in Reli-
 gious Communities proceed, either from the
 pride of some, who would lord & domineer
 over others ; or from the selfishness of others,
 who only wish themselves Superiors, the
 better to do their own wills. Thus charity
 is sacrificed, both to the vanity of the ambi-
 tious, & to the desire of independance in
 the untractable. Did charity truly reign in all
 their hearts, it would soon reunite their
 hands. No one would desire to be Superior,
 but to have one meerly according to her
 natural inclinations. Charity would inspire
 them to yield something on each side, & to
 sacrifice their own proper interest, to the
 glory of God, to union & peace, to the
 greater good of the Monastery, & to the
 spiritual advantage of their souls. Divest your-
 self of yourself ; seek nothing but God &
 your salvation ; & all parties will cease. Then

208 THE PERFECT

it can no longer be said of you, what Saint Paul reproached the Faithful of Corinth with (1. Cor. c. 3. v. 4.) that one was of Apollo, another of Paul; that is, that one was for such a Religious, another was of the opposite party: but what Saint Luke said of the primitive Christians in Jerusalem, will be verified in you, that you have all one heart & one soul, & all belong entirely to Jesus CHRIST.

CXLVI.

Can any one, without an extreme grief, & a flood of tears, imagine, that there are hatreds & animosities in Monasteries? That they are vehement, long, & sometimes inveterate? My God! How the hearts of your Spouses that ought to be as an altar, upon which the fire of your holy charity should burn without ceasing, would be profaned by a passion, opposite to your spirit, which is all meekness, & all love? You hate your Sister JESUS-CHRIST; but does not this hatred fall on JESUS-CHRIST himself, whose sacred Spouse she is? You hate her; but do you not see, that hating her is hating yourself & procuring to yourself as much harm, as the devil desires & seeks to do you? If the Sister, convinced of the hatred you bear her, should think of revenging herself, what greater harm could she do to you, than that which you do to your own soul in hating her? Yes, all your hatred falls back upon yourself. The greater it is, the more furious we may say, you are against yourself. As many sentiments of anger & hatred you have in your heart; as many designs as you frame to yourself of vexing & giving her pain.

many words of murmuring & detraction, you pronounce against her; as many marks you give her of your aversion, by looks, gestures, words; by contempt, raileries, malicious turns; all are so many blows you give yourself; so many wounds you give your soul; so many evils you draw upon it, which that Sister will never feel so much the effect of, notwithstanding all your ill will, as you yourself. Hatred is one of the evils of the soul most hard to be cured; & it is much more so in a Religious, who has always the object present, or meets it almost at every step. If she neglects putting a remedy to it, in the beginning, the evil grows in a very short time, & makes a strange havock in her soul. But, if she goes to communion in those dispositions, one may truly say, the abomination of desolation is brought into the holy place. As human frailty & weakness is great, it is every where to be met with; as soon as ever any dispute happens between two Religious, all the others ought to interest themselves to make it up, if they do not do so of their own accord. You, who have had a quarrel, never permit the evil to grow. If you defer any time to be reconciled to your Sister, you will have greater difficulty to do it afterwards; perhaps even your repentment will augment, by the reflections you will make, or by the malice of the devil, who will not fail to profit of your bad disposition; & you will load yourself with an infinity of sins you will commit, either in your heart, or in your words, or in your actions; besides the scandal, you will occasion in the

210 THE PERFECT

Community, which will also render you guilty of many sins of other people. O how deplorable then will be the state of your soul

CXLVII.

Antipathy, which is a natural aversion for a person, often without reason, or knowing why or wherefore, exposes us very much to sin against charity. If the Religious, who is attacked with it, is of the number of those who live in remissness & relaxation; who have no care of their souls; who abandon themselves to their natural inclinations, & follow the torrent of their passions; it will make her commit many faults against her, who is the object of her aversion; & the greater her antipathy is, the more frequent and more considerable these faults will be. Great trouble will very often happen in the Monastery; & it is one of the greatest evils that can be introduced. But if the Religious, who perceives this bad disposition in herself, be good in the main, & applies herself to the care of her perfection; she will without doubt, have a great deal to suffer from this temptation: the fear of not having resisted it, as she ought, will often alarm her; she will even sometimes yield & give way to it, tho' but slightly; & in short, it will be one of the most tormenting, & most obstinate temptations, she can be subject to. I do not speak to you, who have no sollicitude to correct your faults, & who on the contrary affect to nourish them; you who indulge your passions in every thing, & will take no pains to combat any of them. Ah! what a number of sins will your antipathy make you fall into. As thro' your vicious disposition every thing

the Religious, against whom you are thus
 fected, will offend you, will alienate you,
 will shock you; & you know not how to put
 the least constraint on yourself; you will give
 way to indignation, to impatience, to anger,
 murmuring, to detraction, to jealousy
 against her; you will find fault with whate-
 ver she does; her words, her manners, even
 her virtue will displease you; & the good
 services, she would render you, will excite your
 wrath, & you will return her nothing, but
 enmity for the good, she is ready to do
 you. Thus the more you nourish your anti-
 pathy, the more fatal it will prove to you.
 She will be an executioner, that will torment
 you, & a poison, that will bring death to your
 soul. But you, who sincerely desire to practise
 virtue, & to be pleasing to JESUS-CHRIST,
 if you are troubled and afflicted at your
 temptation; I cannot but own, that it is truly
 a dangerous enemy, against which you ought
 to watch, with so much the greater care, as it
 is always near you, & may do you conside-
 rable damage. Nevertheless be not cast down,
 do not think yourself lost on that account.
 The temptation may lead you into great
 faults, it may also be an occasion of merit,
 according as you resist. & fight against it;
 and what the devil design'd to make use of,
 to destroy charity within you, will most use-
 fully serve to make you practise the most
 sublime acts of it, & of the greatest merit.
 Therefore 1°. Never let any word, or any
 gesture slip, that shews your antipathy; &
 when you speak, or hear others talk of the
 person, for whom you have an aversion, be
 extremely attentive & watchful over your-

self, least any thing should slip from you in discourse, that favours of passion. 2°. Never give way deliberately to any thought, that may either entertain, or satisfy your aversion; & if any should thrust it self into your mind, excite in yourself a great horror of it; & rather cast yourself in thought at the feet of that Religious, asking her pardon interiorly for your little charity in her regard. 3°. If you happen to hear that Religious spoken ill of, or blamed, do not take a secret pleasure in it; but stifle it in yourself, as much as you can; & both in your own mind, & before others, excuse her in what she is thought blamable. 4°. Whenever you think of, or meet her, endeavour to conceive in your heart sentiments of meekness towards her. 5°. Regulate your outward behaviour towards her so well, that she may not always perceive your antipathy; speak always to her with great mildness; do not complain to any one of what is offensive in her; never shew you have any difficulty to bear with her. 6°. Study to render her service when occasion offers, & be more attentive to do her a pleasure, when she asks it of you, than you would be to do it to a friend. 7°. Gain upon yourself, to shew her sometimes exterior marks of a particular friendship; & that you may do it with less difficulty, consider that in it you shew your love to JESUS-CHRIST since it is for his sake that you do it. 8°. Do not shun meeting her, nor the occasions of doing her any pleasure, nor of being in her company, & entertaining yourself with her whether at recreation, or else where. 9°. If you are put with her in any office, do not

use it, but take her for your companion, if JESUS-CHRIST himself, gave & recommended her to you. And, as then you will be more frequently with her, you will stand more in need than ever of moderating yourself. But should you in any occasion, shew your bad humour to her, fail not to repair immediately, either to hinder her from being troubled, or to punish yourself for your want of charity, or to hinder your aversion from growing to a head. In short, pray a great deal; pray with profound humility; pray with fervour & perseverance; above all your Meditations, & holy Communions, be freed & delivered from this temptation. For this devil is principally to be overcome, and cast out by prayer.

CXLVIII.

We are sometimes apt to think a story, we tell & relate, is little or nothing, & nevertheless the consequences shew how much we have passed against charity in telling it. But suppose no such consequences followed; that is owing to the virtue of the Sister to whom we told it; & perhaps it made so deep an impression on her mind, that she stood in need of all her piety, not to let it appear. You, who have the weakness, thus to relate to a Sister, what another may have said, or done in her regard, what good can you propose to yourself in such an indiscreet report? If you think yourself obliged to it, because she is your friend; you ought rather, for this very reason, not to have done it; since so far from contributing to her comfort, or to the good of her soul, you only throw her into trouble, by giving occasion to animosity & murmu-

214 THE PERFECT

ring, & thereby expose her to commit great many faults against patience & charity. If you could not, thro' a too great facility of love of talking, hinder yourself from telling her; when alas! will you know how to be silent; & when shall we be able to say to you, that you speak to the purpose? O how true is it, that the tongue in many people is the instrument & organ of the devil; & how good would it have been for them, to have learnt for a long time to be silent, before speaking one single word! The character of a Tale-teller is one of the worst & most dangerous to Religion; she alone is capable of causing strange trouble, & strange divisions in Religious Communities. But when even you have not contracted this pernicious habit; you ought to take care, & never tell any stories; because the harm that comes from it is so common, & the good so rare, that you ought always to incline, & judge in favour of silence. We may here add, that should one, who is guilty of this fault, & particularly, should she in her rapports tell lies & untruths, present herself to be received in a Monastery, she ought to be a long time tried till she has lost this inclination, or absolutely refused & rejected; otherwise the fatal effects of this bad inclination will soon appear.

CXLIX.

Jealousy is a passion so base, & so great is the confusion it brings, that we are ashamed to let it appear. To confound a Religious, who is so unhappy, as to nourish it in her breast, it is sufficient to write on her forehead; she is jealous. She will never dare shew herself. It can't be better represented

under the figure of a person pale & disfigured & reduced to skin & bones, with darting fiery eyes, knawed by a serpent. Pride, ambition, hatred, an excessive love of ones self, are the fatal roots of this tree of death; & an inward agitation, vexation, despair, are it's baneful fruits. Add those evils, which a jealous mind may cause in a Monastery, when it abandons it self to all, this jealous passion inspires it with. Add the shame it is attachd to it, & the contempt & indignation it gives to others: for what can more excite our indignation, than to see a person torment herself at the prosperity of others, & grieved at what does them a pleasure. O monstrous Passion! See, if with such a collection of evils & sins, which occasion or which it occasions, you will harbour in your breast! See, if at this rate you will reflect yourself, at the good qualities, the advantages, at the virtue & merit of your Sisters! See, if renouncing to your tranquillity, the peace of your conscience, to your honour, to your salvation, & even to your health, for jealousy commonly impairs it, you will keep this serpent in your bosom! Virgin Spouse of JESUS-CHRIST, wholly dedicated to his service, who by your interior peace, by your meekness & your charity, ought in some manner to resemble those, who possess him in heaven, how opposite are you to them? As a damn'd soul is represented, surrounded with furies, plunged in devouring flames, & given up to cruel desires; so might you be represented in the sight of your jealousy. It is a serpent that

gnaws you, a fire that consumes you, a despair that never quits you.

CL.

We often think to commit only a slight offence in speaking ill of others, & we often render ourselves guilty of many considerable sins. O how easy it is to deceive ourselves on this point ! Happy the Religious who do not sin by her tongue ; the account she will have to give, will perhaps, as to the rest, be very small. Our depravity is so great & so general, that detraction may be truly stiled the sin of the whole world. We can scarcely meet two or three together, but the conversation seems to languish & grow dull, if not seasoned with the malicious, & unhappy sin of detraction. We seldom come from any company, without having reason to reproach ourselves, with either having been guilty of it, or having harken'd to it. Some detract maliciously, some wittily, others grossly ; sometimes people, who make a profession of piety, detract, as one may say, piously ; that is, they do it with a pious & devout tone & voice ; but which has neither piety or devotion in it. Never therefore speak of your Sisters, but in an advantageous manner ; impose on yourself a rigorous silence, as to their defects. If they are hidden ones, what cruelty to make them known ? If they are publick, what necessity of publishing them more ? If they are great ones, it is a crime to divulge them ; if they are small, we must not be moved with a desire of detracting, to take any notice of them. In short, of what nature soever they are, charity inspires you to do

veil over them ; which veil of piety I would
 ye you take from off your own faults , that
 you may know them so much the better.
 your true humility & Evangelical charity
 proceed. You shew, in doing the contrary, that
 you are destitute of these two virtues , &
 unfortunately subject to , & tainted with their
 opposite vices.

CLI.

If we recommend to you to be circumspect
 cautious , in regard to the faults of your
 Sisters , & not to make them the subject of
 your discourse in the Monastery ; with how
 much greater reason , ought you to abstain
 from making them known to Seculars ? How
 great would your imprudence & indiscretion
 be , to say no more , if conversing at the
 house with people of the world , you should
 draw the portrait of your Sister , with an un-
 pardonable pencil ? Such a conduct would on-
 ly give scandal , especially if any notable de-
 fault was the subject of your talk & discourse.
 They ought only to come to you to be edi-
 fied , & they go from you loaded with the
 poison of detraction. Where then will you have
 learn charity , if it is not with the
 disciples of JESUS-CHRIST ? Nothing that pas-
 ses in the Monastery ought , thro' your means,
 to transpire abroad. If you have any thing to
 say of your Sisters , praise their virtue &
 their merits , you will find an ample matter
 for your conversation ; & if you do not find
 matter sufficient , it is because your eye is
 malicious , & your heart very barren of cha-
 ritable productions. The world is but too
 one , thro' the contagion that reigns in

218 THE PERFECT

it, to cry down piety, without your lending your assistance. It loves, by the scandals of the Sanctuary, to authorize the licentious lives of its own votaries, & is always delighted to hear the defects of persons consecrated to God, that they may have the less to reproach themselves with their own vices. Besides, a small defect, which you tell to strangers, may afterwards pass through many mouths, & take a monstrous form, by the different reports that are made of it; & what scandalized no body in the Monastery, because it was almost nothing in it self, becomes scandalous abroad by the turn they give it. And this is what your imprudence causes.

CLII.

It would not be a less indiscretion to acquaint the Novices of the faults of the professed Religious; & you might even reproach yourself with furnishing them with an occasion of being tempted in their vocation. These young plants, as yet but little trained to the exercise of virtue, & susceptible of prejudices, may perhaps by their reflections magnify in their minds the things they heard, & take the mole you shewed them in the eye of the others for a beam; & who knows, thence conceiving a false idea of a Religious life, they may not stagger in their holy resolution? The imprudence would be still much greater, was you to tell them what passes in chapter, particularly when the Sisters give their votes for admitting them to their profession. How deep a wound would you give to charity & to good order, was you to say to them, such a one spoke against you; but such another spoke in your favour.

These received you, & those rejected you; be on your guard against such a Sister, it was not her fault if you was not turned out? You would sin directly against the secret you are entrusted with, and that in a matter of weight, you would expose those young Novices to murmur, & to have a resentment against their Sisters; resentment that may perhaps last a long while, & which they may have the greatest difficulty to overcome. We may truly say, that an imprudent Religious may do more harm to the reputation of her Monastery, by her indiscreet talking, than another, who has no virtue, but at least has good sense enough to speak with caution.

CLIII.

You ought to take notice only of what may edify you in your Sisters, unless, by your office, you are obliged to watch over their conduct. A private Religious ought to be so well shut up, as one may say, in herself, as to have neither eyes to see the actions of others, nor a tongue to speak of them. This would be a sure means to preserve peace & charity; & those two virtues would never suffer, in the Monasteries where this maxim is observed, were they even to contain a thousand Religious. The spirit of curiosity & criticism on the behaviour of others, is a spirit of discord in Religion. If the defects of your Sisters are so apparent to you, that you cannot help perceiving them, do not for that lose the esteem & friendship, charity obliges you to have for them; nor take thence an occasion to speak ill of them, to murmur at them, or criticise them; but let the faults

220 THE PERFECT

that shock you in them, excite you to correct your own. Thus all will turn out to the profit of your soul, & you will prepare for yourself a merciful sentence, having exercised mercy towards your Sisters.

CLIV.

Never do any thing that may disedify your Sisters; and on the other hand, be not easily scandalized at the faults they commit. We cannot call good what is evil; but, had we true charity, the evil we see in our neighbours ought rather to excite our compassion for those that commit it, than move us to trouble, hatred, or indignation. Nothing will surprise you in the faults of others, if you consider the greatness of human frailty, but you will rather be inclined to pray for those of your Sisters you see in fault; & if your zeal is truly pure & your sentiments truly humble, they will never appear so frail to you, but that you will always think yourself more frail than them, & the resolution you will take from their faults will be to watch more carefully over yourself, for fear of falling into greater faults.

CLV.

If raillery & jesting enliven sometimes conversation, it more generally falls out that charity is prejudiced by them. She that jests & banters, & she that is bantered, seldom part content with each other. Raillery the most innocent, if carried on too long, repeated too often, becomes offensive. We bear with it at first, we then begin to feel it, we afterwards, by a sour peevish air, show our dislike; at length we wax angry, we answer biting, we take it in the worst part, & charity disappears, to give place to anger.

CLVI.

We sometimes take more liberty, in times of recreation, to jest & banter our Sisters; but if we do it in a way that creates them uneasie, recreation is no longer a relaxation of the mind, it degenerates into an abuse, & does great harm to our conscience. How great is our misery, & how blameable are we, to make use of that against charity, which was establish'd to preserve it? I had rather the Religious should innocently divert themselves together, than have them seek amusements in the Parlours; for the mind must be always bent, it must from time to time be eased & refreshed, & therefore, in regular Communities, there are set hours appointed for recreation. But all ought to pass in such a manner, that charity does not lose its rights, nor vigour; & if you take a pride in, or value yourself on having any wit; you ought rather to make use of it, to render the recreation beneficial and agreeable to your Sisters, than to make yourself insupportable to them, by your satirical jests & raillery. Otherwise I will grant you have wit, since you will have it appear, but I must add, you have a bad heart, since you take a malicious pleasure in vexing those, for whom you ought to show nothing but friendship.

CLVII.

Since the occasion offers to speak of the recreations established in Religious Communities, the better to keep up union & charity, I may say it is particularly to those times, what the scripture says may be apply'd: *It is a time to laugh.* It is permitted then

222 THE PERFECT

innocently to divert ones self, & it would be indiscreet, & quite out of the way, to keep the same serious air at them, as in the Refectory or Chapter. Neither is it just to exact from the young the gravity of the ancients: their age does not allow it to be so. What will make a Novice, or a young Professed laugh heartily, will scarce make a Jubilant smile: the ancients must not grumble at the mirth & gaiety of the young, when it is kept within due limits; nor the young be vex'd at the phlegm & indifference of the ancients who cannot laugh at what so much diversifies them. Every body ought to bear each other with meekness & charity; & every one ought so to behave herself, that the recreations may answer the ends of their institution; I mean they may serve to unbend the mind, in order to give it new vigour & strength to recollect itself afterwards, & to keep & entertain the Religious in the most strict union & charity. We may add, that recreation ought to be look'd upon as an act of Community, in which every Religious ought to be present thro' a principle of regularity & charity. And truly it is much more edifying to see all the Religious merrily divert themselves together than to see them do it separately & in particular. That shews more union & common charity, & particular recreations among a few always denote some division of minds, or at least that some, not sympathising with the others, have not virtue enough to charitably bear with their conversation. And I had rather see a Religious, at the hour of recreation divert herself innocently with her Sisters, than see her retire to her cell, thro' a misplaced liking

retreat, or thro' a mistaken devotion, take
at time to perform her spiritual lecture, or
mental prayer. Every exercise in Religion
as it's hour fixt; this is not to content your
particular inclination, but to give yourself
to what you owe your Sisters, & if your
office or obedience does not call you else-
where, charity calls you to divert yourself in
the Lord with them.

CLVIII.

Be officious & complaisant, always ready
to render service to your Sisters, particular-
ly to those who cannot serve themselves,
either thro' infirmity or old age. A benevo-
lent heart can never see a Sister in need of
help, without eagerly & immediately flying to
her succour. A Sister who is thus compassio-
nate & ready to render service to the others,
is most agreeable to God, a most edifying
example to the Community, & her acts of
charity will acquire her a high degree of glo-
ry in heaven. Is not this enough, & what
more can be wanting to encourage you?
This alone ought to make you embrace all
occasions with joy, & suffer with pain that
they occur so seldom. But how great ought
your fervour & charity to be in serving your
Sisters, when you do it in virtue of the
office you are placed in, & may thereby give
new value to your acts of charity, by the
merit of obedience! My God! How dear
ought this employ be to you, & how ought
it to comfort your soul! With what eagerness
ought you to endeavour to procure them all
ease & relief, that is in your power!
With what patience & what meekness, ought
you to bear with whatever is painful or fa-

224 THE PERFECT

tiguing in their service ! Remember they are the Spouses of JESUS - CHRIST whom you serve , & that in serving them , you serve JESUS - CHRIST himself. Enliven here your faith as much as your charity ; esteem yourself in your office as greatly honoured & privileged. Prefer it to the richest Diadems of the world ; be so sollicitous to fulfil it in all its extent & perfection , that should there be in the Infirmary a Sister , who is difficult , delicate , sensible , & if I dare say , untractable ; you may win her heart by your meekness , affability & patience , by your indefatigable zeal & address in serving her , so that she may be forced to praise your carriage & behaviour in her regard.

CLIX.

Some are so insensible to the sufferings of others , that they might justly be asked if they have any feeling. This in a Religious may proceed from the strength of her own temperament , which never having been impaired by any sickness , makes her think the ills , which others complain of , are only imaginary ones & that they only complain , because they are too tender , & harken to themselves more than they ought. It may also happen in a Religious of a contrary complexion , from considering her own infirmities only , that those of others become strangers to her , & howsoever great appear nothing to her , in comparison of her own , & which sometimes are only considerable in her own opinion. What here may be remarked , & what ought to appear singular is , that generally those Religious , who are not in the least touched with the sufferings of their Sisters ; who think they always com-

ain without reason ; who believe them
 arce sick , when they are in their agony , &
 no would question their death ; did they not
 e them buried ; what there is here singular
 , that those same Religious are often those ,
 at render less service to the Community ,
 give more trouble to it ; because an in-
 nifibility to the pains & sickness of others ,
 a defect generally accompanied with many
 hers. Whilst a Religious that has a tender
 heart , & is sensible to the pains of her Sisters ,
 most proper for society , wins the friendship
 esteem of all , & is a great help to a Supe-
 or , for the different employs of the Com-
 munity.

CLX.

The life of the Hospital Nuns is a state that
 ay be called holy , by way of excellence , &
 hich is truly according to the heart of JESUS-
 CHRIST. What praises can we give it , that are
 always inferior to what may be said of it ?
 certainly neither flesh nor blood inspire these
 houses of JESUS-CHRIST , with the admirable
 counsel of serving this divine Master in his
 offering members ; it is the spirit of his hea-
 venly Father. Their charity is pure & without
 mixture of self-love ; since there is nothing
 their painful functions , that can satisfy na-
 re , & on the contrary every thing shocks
 their natural delicacy ; every thing clashes
 with it , did not grace support them. You
 whom the Lord has called to this holy insti-
 tution , so conformable to his tender goodness
 infinite mercy , never be tired in complying
 with it's obligations. If you acquit yourselves
 faithfully of them , you will at the day of the
 general Judgment, in presence of all the Celestial

226 THE PERFECT

spirits & of all mankind, receive from the mouth of JESUS-CHRIST himself the greatest praises. To you principally he will address these comfortable words: (Matt. 25. v. 3. 4.) *Come, ye blessed of my father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry & you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, & you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, & you took me in; naked, & you clothed me, sick, & you visited me.* Rejoice then in hearing this, & comfort yourselves in your labours. May this truth, so sweet & so comfortable to a soul that loves JESUS-CHRIST, always animate & encourage you more & more. If the poor should appear loathsome & nasty, remember that JESUS-CHRIST, whom you serve in their persons, is the most beautiful among the children of men. If they have no regard, no gratitude for the pains you take with them, remember that JESUS-CHRIST himself will be your recompence. If in short your fatigues are great; remember that JESUS-CHRIST, for these passing labours, prepares for you a repose that will never end. Apply yourself therefore with meekness, with patience, with humility & with an affectionate devotion, to all that your state of serving the poor demands of your charity. The less satisfaction you find with them, according to the inclination of nature, the more you will render yourself deserving of the consolations of grace, & you will become agreeable to the eyes of this divine Spouse, for whom alone you ought to act. Let us give the same praise & testimony to the Religious, who by their vocation are called to instruct & bring up young children. What

God do they not do in the church, & what
 glory do they not render to JESUS-CHRIST, by
 instructing them in their duties, by correc-
 ting betimes their growing vices; by training
 them up in the practice of Christian virtues,
 endeavouring to preserve their young
 hearts in a happy innocence! You perform,
 zealous Virgins, for the glory & honour of
 our divine Spouse, you perform, I say, in
 their regard, the office of a Tutelar Angel.
 You are, as may be said, their visible Angel
 that enlightens them, that encourages them,
 that corrects & redresses them, that guides &
 protects them in all. What crowns are not
 laid up for you, if you acquit yourself reli-
 giously of an employ so useful & so holy!
 These tender plants, thro' your care, growing
 in virtue with their age, will carry with them,
 to the different states they will one day em-
 brace, the pious education that you gave
 them. Those who enter into Religion, will
 refer to the lessons of their Mistresses a heart
 already prepared by innocence, for all the
 practices & virtues of a Religious life. Those
 who fix in the world, will spread the sweet
 odour of the instructions they received from
 your charity; instructions, which they them-
 selves will give in their families, & which
 will be therein perpetuated, like a salutary
 stream, that diffuses it self by different chan-
 nels, of which, next after God, you will be
 the source. Thus a child, piously educated by
 you, will, as one may say, render you the
 spiritual mother of all those, she, in conse-
 quence of the education she had from you,
 piouly brings up herself, But how blameable

228 THE PERFECT

would you be, if instead of breeding up for God the children he confides to your care you should inspire them with the spirit of maxims of the world; you should train them up in nothing but vanity, & let them remain in their faults, either thro' a tenderness, they ought rather to be called cruelty, or thro' a negligence, contrary to the zeal your vocation requires of you. The loss of these souls will infallibly draw after it the loss of yours, & you will bring down upon yourself all the Anger of God. For you, whose institution does not call you to the education of children, nor to the service of the sick, you may, in your retreat, exercise most excellent acts of charity by your prayers. Pray for the conversion of sinners, pray for those who are employed in the august Ministry of the sanctification of souls. Intercede with almighty God for what ever tends to his glory & to the salvation of your neighbour. You will, by your vows & prayers, be associated to the Evangelical labourers, & will contribute to the propagation of the Empire of JESUS-CHRIST. The numerous & surprising conversions made, and not always effected & brought about by the famous Preacher, by this great Missionary, this renown'd Director; they are sometimes the effect of the fervent prayers of a soul hardened in the fight of God, that draws down a blessing on the labours of his Ministers. And by your piety, you become such a hidden fervent soul, you may by your ardent vows & prayers, draw down the same blessings, greatly operate to these marvellous conversions.



T H E
PERFECT RELIGIOUS.

PART THE THIRD.

Of an Interior Life.

ART. I.

HAPPY is that soul, which heareth the Lord speaking within her; & from his mouth receiveth the word of comfort. Happy ears, which receive the veins of the divine whisper, & take no notice of the whisperings of this world. Happy ears indeed, which harken to truth it self teaching within, & not to the voice which soundeth without. Happy eyes, which are shut to outward things, & attentive to the interior. Happy they who penetrate into internal things, & endeavour to prepare themselves more & more by daily exercises to the attaining of heavenly secrets. Happy they who seek to be wholly intent on God, & who rid themselves of every worldly impediment. By these words full of celestial unction, the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST (B. 3.

230 THE PERFECT

c. i. n. i.) invites us to an interior life ; exhorts us to disengage ourselves from creatures , & to free ourselves from the servitude of our senses , to occupy our thoughts with nothing but God ; & in short , presses us to renounce to the vain satisfactions of the earth to render ourselves worthy of tasting that hidden Manna , which JESUS-CHRIST reserves for those generous souls , who leave all to follow & attach themselves to him.

II.

There are some Religious so contrary to these excellent dispositions , that , it may be said , they have obstacles almost insuperable ; so great is their aversion for the things of God , so extreme their attachment to the things of this world ; so strange is their dissipation. Others in reality are good ; they keep their vows , & observe the principal points of their Rule ; they assist at the Office with respect , & do not on slight reasons dispense with themselves in the exercises of the Community ; but otherwise they have mean thoughts on the practice of virtues ; they have no emulation for an interior life ; they are tied to thousand little earthly affections ; they mortify themselves almost in nothing ; they love their own ease ; they easily follow the inclinations of nature ; their piety is so mingling , that it may be compared to a rough hewed statue , so far from being brought to perfection. There are also those , who have seriously undertaken to acquire the perfection of their state , who faithfully exercise themselves in the practice of virtues ; who strive to make continual progress in them ; who

reach over their mind, over all the motions of their heart, over their senses, over all their actions, to keep themselves wholly in order; who endeavour constantly to purify themselves from the bad leaven of creatures & self-love, that they may be able to present themselves before almighty God in an entire purity of heart. In a word, they seek God sincerely, they attach themselves to him alone, relish him alone, & repose in him alone. We believe that the Religious extremely relaxed, of whom we spoke, are very rare, & that their number is very far from being as great, as that of the good ones we mention'd; but it is to be wished, that all would strive & labour to become interior; & if there are a great many such, how much more edifying would it be were they all so?

III.

It is truly a subject of grief to see Religious persons live in tepidity & sloth; to have no zeal nor fervour for their perfection; to have them feel nothing but a disgust for exercises of piety; to look upon the time of prayer as the most painful of the day; & a retreat of ten days as an entreprize above their strength, whilst they might, without any great difficulty, become children of prayer, persons interior & spiritual, terrestrial Angels, true Spouses of JESUS-CHRIST, whom he would load with his graces, & honour with his most singular favours. What hinders them is such a trifle; the amusements they are taken up with so much, are so frivolous; the vain satisfactions they seek with so great eagerness, are so despicable; that when we

see them give themselves over to empty Bubbles, & as it may be said, to meer nothings & prefer them to the greatest of all goods such as is that of uniting ones self to **JESUS CHRIST**, by the affections of an interior life we can't help crying out: O weakness of creatures! O human frailty! O blindness! O insensibility! You who prefer the comforts of the earth before those, which **JESUS-CHRIST** offers you, give ear & harken to the voice of this divine Master, more attentive to your interest than you are yourself. He says in the book of his Imitation: [B. 3. c. 1. n. 1.]
 „ I am thy salvation, thy peace, & thy life
 „ keep thy self with me, & thou shalt find
 „ peace. Let alone all transitory things,
 „ seek things eternal. What are all temporal
 „ things, but deceit? And what will all things
 „ created avail thee, if thou be forsaken of
 „ thy Creator? Cast off then all earthly
 „ things, & make thy self agreeable to thy
 „ Creator, & faithful to him, that so thou
 „ may'st attain to true happiness.

IV.

Yield then to the pressing & tender solicitations of **JESUS-CHRIST**; rise whilst he stretches out his hand; why will you tarry grovel on the earth? Why will you remain in dust & abjection, contemptible in the sight of God & his Angels, abased by your passions & slothfulness? Are you made to attach yourself to perishable objects? Is your soul more noble than sensible things? It was created for God alone; to him alone she ought to tend, & in him alone she ought to place her glory, & her happiness. Cast

RELIGIOUS. 233

When all laziness, all pusillanimity, all slothfulness. Put on sentiments worthy of JESUS-CHRIST, who desires to attract you; sentiments worthy of a Spouse of JESUS-CHRIST, who ought to live for him alone. Animate & encourage yourself; borrow of holy desire the wings of fervour, spread them with an ardour of amorous affection; turn your eyes from every thing that is upon the earth, to fix them only on the objects of a happy eternity. Take your flight towards the summit of the mountain of divine union; fly & stop not, till you are arrived at it, & repose on it for ever.

V.

Many look upon an interior life as a state of illusion, in which, under pretext of spirituality, we feed ourselves with pious chimeras. They treat as puerilities & indiscretion, the holy practices it teaches; humiliation is weakness; patience, a want of sense & courage; the love of retirement, a gloomy vapour, a misanthropy; penance a cruelty, or at least indiscreet severity against ones self; application to prayer, Idleness; & the whole spiritual life, the portion of the false illuminated, & of little genius's. Pride inspires them with these sentiments; the blindness of mind proceeding from the depravation of the heart, makes them ridicule, & blaspheme what they are ignorant of. They may be compared to the false Sages of the Areopagus, who laugh'd at Saint Paul, when he spoke to them of the resurrection of the dead. [Acts. 17. v. 32.]

VI.

Others imagine, that an interior life consists

234 THE PERFECT

in extraordinary dispositions, in eminent gifts of prayer; in raptures, ecstasies; in what mystical divinity teaches of the most sublime spirituality. Thus persuaded, that almighty God only communicates these special gifts & favours to very few, they dare not aim & aspire at an interior life; & look upon it so much above their reach, as to think they should be guilty of the highest presumption, were they attempt it.

VII.

Virtues are the foundation of an interior life, & particularly a contempt of the world, a disengagement from creatures, humility, mortification, a submission of our will to God, &c. The means to attain to an interior life principally are, an attention to the presence of God, meditation, prayers, reading of good books, examen of conscience, frequent Communion, &c. An interior life in itself is a sacred commerce of our heart with our Lord JESUS-CHRIST.

VIII.

The whole of an interior life consists in these three points. *Fly, seek & repose.* Fly creatures, seek the Creator, & repose yourself in him. Fly creatures; that is to say, disengage yourself from all affection to created things, & above all divest yourself of yourself. Seek the Creator; but seek him sincerely, seek him alone, seek him in all that you do, seek him by the right way, which is that of the practice of virtues, & of the Imitation of our Lord JESUS-CHRIST. In short, repose yourself in him; that is, place your glory, your happiness, your confidence, your peace in him alone.

IX.

A Religious that has a mind to taste the advantages of an interior life, ought chiefly to apply herself to three things. 1. To empty her mind of the very thoughts of the things of this world. 2. To stifle all vain desires in her heart. 3. To Judge of nothing, but in conformity to the spirit of the Gospel. She must moreover give herself entirely up to her advancing in perfection. She must, with a holy fervour & constant fidelity, endeavour to please our Lord JESUS-CHRIST, & must propose to herself no other end but this, in all she undertakes.

X,

Would you have your heart intimately united to the heart of JESUS? Shut the door of it to all, that is not of God. Break all ties, whatsoever they are, that may be a hindrance to your being most perfectly his. Reserve nothing to yourself that may retard, or stop you in your holy course. The more you are free & disengaged from all creatures, the more swiftly you will run, & will sooner arrive at what you aim.

XI.

O how great a treasure is a freedom & disengagement of heart! With what astonishing rapidity do we run in the way of perfection, when we are tied to nothing? But howsoever little, thro' passion & sensible affection, we attach ourselves to any thing, we grow heavy, we walk slowly, & often either stop in our course, or go backward in lieu of advancing. To how many souls have not these attachments been of the greatest preju-

236 THE PERFECT

dice? How many conversions have by them been render'd false or barren? How many who having even begun as they ought, have not persevered, & have even relapsed into their first errors.

XII.

Renounce to all vain commerce of the world, & you will be before-hand an inhabitant of Heaven. Repress the curiosity, that pushes you on to inform yourself of whatever passes in the world, & you will have greater facility to contemplate divine things. Repute for nothing whatever is transitory. Look upon the earth as a place of exile, & live as a pilgrimage. Be thoroughly convinced you have not here a fixt habitation, a lasting city. Make the objects of eternity familiar to you by often reflecting on them. All this will contribute to disengage you; & by these considerations & these sentiments you will become interior.

XIII.

You will never be interior, if you lose your time in idle discourses. Avoid them as much as you can, & discretion permits, without transgressing the rules of charity. Do not attach yourself to any one thro' a natural affection. Shun above all the frequent visits of people of the world, & chiefly of men, howsoever pious they may be; live in the Monastery in union with all your Sisters, without shewing any partiality, or particular preference. Let Jesus be all in all to you, & neither love nor seek any one, but in him & for him.

XIV.

We are made notwithstanding you will find

or society, & did we fly every body, we should pass for so many savages, which would be prejudicial to piety; they would say, she is sad, she is wild, she is an enemy to all conversation; & those people who have a mind to practise virtue, & be interior, will be alienated from it, & disheartened. Vain pretences of self-love, that only seeks to shew itself, to talk, to be dissipated; that covers itself bent for dissipation, under the appearance of zeal. Be not seduced, you are not called for the conversion of souls; & your retreat, so far from being a bad example, will teach others, that an interior life has sweets & charms in it, since you so easily abandon the satisfactions of creatures for it.

XV.

The prejudice a soul receives from the commerce of creatures, ought rather to make us desire to be without their company, than to seek it. We seldom come from any conversation, but our conscience reproaches us with some fault, & the too frequent conversation, even with pious persons, is capable of straining us from sanctity. O how much more secure should we be, by seeking our safety in a salutary flight! Why, O my God! do we not prefer to entertain ourselves with God, from whom instead of losing, we reap infinite advantage for our salvation, rather than to spend our time in vain & idle discourses with the children of men; howsoever pious they are, or may be?

XVI.

We are so miserable, that even the discourses of piety sometimes turn to the prejudice of

238 THE PERFECT

our souls. We often speak of the things of God, less out of the love of him, & for his glory, than to appear knowing & skilful in a spiritual life, & to content our self-love & the inclination we have for dissipation. But if we grow weak, if we commit faults when even our talk & discourses seem to be innocent, with how much greater reason ought we to fear those, that are useless & vain. The most sure way to become truly interior therefore is, to love silence, solitude, & retirement; & to accustom ourselves never to speak, but when it is more advantageous for us to do it, than to hold our tongues.

XVII.

Another very essential maxim, to enjoy the sweet repose of an interior life, is, not to trouble yourself with what passes in the Monastery any more, than you are obliged to by some particular duty. Confine yourself to the care of your soul, & to the limits of your office, if you have one. Interfere not with that of others; nor examine their conduct. If you do, you may thereby satisfy your curiosity, but will fill your mind with distracting thoughts: sentiments of trouble, of false zeal, of murmuring, of jealousy, will rise within your breast; you will often sin & trespass with the tongue, & perhaps disturb the peace of the Monastery. "Be not curious" says our Lord in the book of his Imitation [B. 3. c. 24. n. 1.] " & give not way to useless cares: what is this or that to thee? Do thou follow me: for what is it to thee, whether this man be such, or such; or that man do or say this, or the other? The

art not to answer for others, but must give an account of thy self; why therefore dost thou meddle with them? All things therefore are to be committed to me; but as for thy part, keep thy self in good peace. „

XVIII.

A Religious of a lively stirring temper will find this lesson of the book of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST very difficult to follow, because she thinks she must meddle with every thing; she is in her element when in action; she can neither remain herself, nor let others be at rest; & she often deceives herself in her continual bustling, as if it proceeded from good zeal, whilst it is only an effect of her own inclination. If you are of this character, use all your endeavours to moderate yourself; be ready to do what obedience prescribes; but do not procure of yourself any exterior occupations, nor prevent the will of your Superior in it. Distrust your own zeal in every thing that is distracting, & as much as is in your power, shut yourself up in retirement; waiting your destination from the good will of your Superior alone, to draw you out of it. This is a means to become interior, & to hinder your inclination throwing you into distractions in the employs, that may be given you.

XIX.

Zeal is a virtue; but it is easy to be mistaken in it; if discretion does not keep it under, it will lead us beyond it's just bounds, & make us commit many imprudent actions. Do not give ear to it, if it would engage you in works, not proper to your state; above all in works

of charity, that regard people of the world this, should you give yourself to it, would be a means to be continually beset, & teased in the Speak-house by one, or by the other. You would draw on yourself a multitude of affairs to unravel & finish; now you will be charged with one commission, now with another; one alone will engage you to deal with many persons, & will fill your mind with a thousand distractions, which will molest you in time of Meditation, & of the Office. You would in short be out of your profession, & would cast yourself a far off from the secure haven of an interior life, like a ship drove from the coast, & tossed by an impetuous wind into the main ocean.

XX.

I value & regard the virtue of a Religious tho' it outwardly appears, & tho' the esteem they have of her in the world, should sometimes draw people to her, to be edify'd by her conversation, or to recommend themselves to her prayers. If these visits are not too frequent; if she does not take a vain pleasure in them; if she does not procure them; she does not take upon her to give advice on temporal affairs, nor set up to direct souls; on the contrary, if she bears the visits with reluctance, if she speaks little, retires as soon as she can; all hitherto very well, & I hope she will lose nothing of her recollection, nor of the spirit of retirement. But if on account of the reputation she has acquired by her piety, the Parlours become an office, where she treats of, & canvasses worldly affairs; or a pulpit, from whence she

RELIGIOUS. 241

tends to give lessons of spirituality, to all
 omers & goers; I mistrust her virtue; it is to
 e suspected of illusion, & if it is real &
 ue, I very much fear it cannot last long.

XXI.

Let your Cell serve you for a fortress &
 trenchment against all dissipation. Love it
 your faithful companion; keep it, that it
 ay keep you, & never go out of it without
 ason. Let it only be to go to common acts of
 community, & to what your employ or obe-
 ence require of you. Place your treasure in
 it, that your heart may always tend to it, &
 ing you back, when you have nothing to
 elsewhere. Thou shalt find the unction of
 od, says the Author of the Imitation of
 us-CHRIST, (B. 1. c. 20. n. 5.) "In thy
 Cell, & thou shalt often lose it abroad.
 Thy Cell, if thou continue in it, grows
 sweet; but if thou keep not to it, be-
 comes tedious & distasteful. If in the begin-
 ning of thy conversion thou accustom thy
 self to remain in it, & keep it well, it will
 be to thee afterwards a dear friend, & a
 most agreeable delight."

XXII.

Never be without doing something in your
 cell; occupy yourself in praying, reading,
 in working. All piety that leads to idleness
 false. An idle life was never the life of the
 saints. It is a principle established in an inte-
 or life, that we must be always occupied in
 something useful; we then do two good things
 a time; that of avoiding idleness, & all
 e ills it occasions, & that of working,
 which is a true solid good; since it is recom-

242 THE PERFECT

mended to us, & has it's merit in the sight of God, when done according to the rule which piety prescribes.

XXIII.

How much I pity you, if you have no occupation, if you find time to lose ! What a life is an idle life ! You must, if you have nothing to do, either give yourself over to your own reflections, or you must seek amusements elsewhere ; if you abandon yourself to your own reflections, the devil will inspire you with those that are always of the worst ; & your heart will be exposed to his malicious suggestions, as an open field is to wild beasts & robbers : & if you seek to amuse yourself elsewhere ; you will be seen idly, with no edification, running about the Monastery disturbing now this Sister, now that, till you become troublesome, dissipating yourself in a strange manner, not to mention many other sins you will undoubtedly render yourself guilty of.

XXIV.

Shun also the opposite extreme, & do not undertake a multitude of external occupations with which your mind would be entirely taken up, & your heart overwhelmed. What place would be left in your soul for the things of God, & how could you ever recollect yourself in him ? He has not withdrawn you from the tumult of the world, to throw you into a chaos of distracting affairs in Religion ; but to work out your salvation with peace & tranquillity.

XXV.

Pretend not however to make a handle

that has been said, to excuse your indolence. When you are told not to over-
load yourself with dissipating occupations; it
is not meant that you have any right to re-
fuse those which the Superior, or the Com-
munity charge you with: it is much more
secure for you to submit; & I apprehend less
your being dissipated, had you the care of the
state, or of the Pensioners, thro' obedience,
than if, by your importunities, dispensed
from them, you was to spend half the day in
meditation in your chamber.

XXVI.

Should the Superior permit you to do any
work for Seculars, do not fix a short time to
finish it in, that may oblige you to be in
haste. What would be the consequence? You
could willingly do it for the time you pro-
mised; you will work with an eagerness; you
will, in order to finish it soon, be tempted to
leave of some part of your exercises of pie-
ty, & perhaps you will really do it. Your
mind will be continually uneasy, & taken up
with your work that presses you; & you will
in one week, thus agitated, lose more of the
spirit of recollection, than you would have
deavoured to acquire in some months.

XXVII.

„Make it thy aim,, says the Author of the
imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 3. c. 38. n. 1.)
that in every place, & in every action or
outward employment, thou be inwardly
free & Master of thy self, & that all
things be under thee, & not thou under
them: that thou may'st be the lord &
ruler of thy actions, not a slave or

„ bondsman. „ Thus this great Master of an interior life teaches us so to undertake external occupations, as not to abandon ourselves altogether to them. We ought not to attach our heart to them, but make them serve to our spiritual progress. We must not fill our minds with them, nor fix our affections upon them, but pass, as one may say thro' these occupations, without letting them be a hindrance to our going to God, or ever stop us ever so little in our continual tendency towards him. Let us so behave in them that our heart may lose nothing of it's liberty & facility of raising it self up to God. “ The „ Children of God, adds the same Author „ (ibid), suffer not themselves to be drawn „ away by temporal things to cleave to them „ but they rather draw these things to the „ end for which they were ordained by God „ & appointed by that Sovereign Artiste, who „ has left nothing in all his works, but what „ is regular & orderly. „

XXVII.

We then put a great obstacle to an interior life, when in these occupations, we speak of, we give ourselves up to an eagerness, accompanied with trouble & anxiety, that cause emotions in the heart, & shews it self outwardly by our vivacity, our bad humours & impatience; when we act as if we had mind to do all together, or in an instant when we do not succeed according to our wishes, nor advance as we desire, we abandon ourselves to vexation, to chagrin against the work, against ourselves, against the Religious that helps us. All this, I say,

grand obstacle to an interior life ; because we lose the tranquillity & peace of our souls , we have our minds full of what we do , & are not in a state of raising ourselves up to God , with liberty & freedom ; & in a word , because we lose the merit of our labour , doing it with so many faults & after a manner purely human , or rather vicious & defective.

XXIX.

O how worthy of compassion are those religious , who work in this manner ! How much to be pitied to torment their minds & rack their bodies , & who give themselves so much pains , that will avail them nothing towards the saving of their souls ! Why thus trouble yourself ? Why so many commotions , so much agitation of the mind ? Is it doing what Almighty God would have you do ? Without doubt , it is neither his will , nor that of your superior. It is not expected you should work more than your strength permits ; that you should do many things at once ; or in less time than the nature of the work requires. Quiet yourself then , & act with more tranquillity. What you cannot do to day , you will finish to morrow. Do every thing the best you can ; employ the time that is necessary ; think not of other things ; by degrees you will come to an end of all , without putting yourself in such an excessive solicitude , and abandonning yourself to so much vagrin & anxiety.

XXX.

Let us here , by the way , observe that a Religious is guilty of a great indiscretion , when

246 THE PERFECT

in doing the work of her office in the anxious manner we condemn, she makes, thro' her impatience & hastiness, the Religious assign her for an assistant, suffer her bustling disposition. You who are exposed to, & have these sallies of vivacity to bear with, oppose to them nothing but meekness, humility & patience; & make a sacrifice of your resentment in these occasions, that are shocking to your self-love. Thus you will practise a more pure virtue, which will be of great merit in the sight of God. But you, who by your rough ways, thus try the patience of your assistant, consider how much such a conduct is contrary, I dont say to charity only, but to justice, civility & good sense. What have you more than your assistant, to think you have a right to make her suffer your peevish temper? If you are her ancient, you ought to have acquired more virtue than she, & you ought to set her an example of it. If you are her equal, your carriage towards her, is nothing but pride & arrogance, & you deserve not to live with the Spouses of JESUS-CHRIST.

XXXI.

If a too great eagerness in our exterior occupations is a fault; diligence is no less a virtue. Never hasten yourself so much as to fall into anxiety and trouble; but on the other hand, be not of the number of those who spend a whole day in doing what might be done in an hour. Slowness shews we do not work with disgust, because we would willingly spare ourselves & love an idle life; which is a fault in every one, & much more so in a Religious. If it is for God that you work

How dare you do it with so much negligence? Does he not deserve you should work for him, with affection & zeal? But this zeal, this affection, are altogether incompatible with laziness & idleness.

XXXII.

If the affection with which you do your work, is more for the work it self, than for God; it becomes a cause of dissipation & an occasion of your being often deficient in your regular duties. You are employed in sowing, or imbroidering, to which you have a liking; & do it with pleasure & delight. When you are at it, the bell rings to the office; if in your work you have God in view, you will, at the first sound of the bell, lay your work aside, & with gravity & a recollected mind, repair to the holy exercise it calls you to. But if in working you seek more to satisfy yourself, than to please God; you will not be exact in immediately leaving of your work, you will do some more stitches, you will only give it over at the last, & with regret; you will then run to the office, with a mind distracted & entirely taken up with your work, that will create a thousand distractions in your prayers. Thus your infidelity will make you commit many faults; & your too great & natural attachment to your work, will stop the work of your sanctification.

XXXIII.

By strictly examining ourselves on the multiplicity of affairs, we embrace by our own choice; or on the too great eagerness that leads us to them; or on the negligence with which we perform them; we shall soon find

248 THE PERFECT

that God is not what we seek; & that we only follow our own humour, & satisfy our own inclinations. This Religious is desirous in the office she is put in, to out do those that were in it before her, & to deserve that she should say she does it better. That is willing to be esteemed to have an universal talent fit for every thing, & one who does more work than any one else. Another is entirely attached to her work, because it suits her fancy, & she has none for any thing else. O how imperfect is all this, & how difficult to reconcile it with that purity of intention which ought to be the soul, as I may say of all the actions of a Religious!

XXXIV.

„ With two wings, ” says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 2. c. 4. n. 1.)
 „ a man is lifted up above earthly things
 „ That is, with *Simplicity* & *Purity*. *Simplicity*
 „ must be in the intention; *Purity* in the
 „ affection. *Simplicity* aims at God; *Purity*
 „ takes hold of him & tastes him. No good
 „ action will hinder thee, if thou be free
 „ within from inordinate affection. If thou
 „ intendest & seekest nothing else but the
 „ will of God, & the profit of thy neighbour
 „ thou shalt enjoy internal liberty. „ In our
 „ actions then, which are good in themselves
 „ all consists in having a simple intention, &
 „ pure affection, if we would do them with
 „ liberty of mind & tranquillity of heart. But
 „ if our intention is not right; if we do not
 „ propose God for our end; if our affections
 „ are irregular, if we attach ourselves to what we
 „ do thro’ self-love, or any other moveable

not of God, we shall then be overwhelmed with trouble & agitation, & shall not taste the sweets & unction of an interior life.

XXXV.

In whatever you do, propose to yourself nothing but to please God; & let this sentiment be deeply rooted in your heart. You have nothing else to seek after in this life, especially since you are entered into Religion: you have renounced to all that could attach you to the world; you have renounced to titles, to riches, to pleasures, to conveniences, to pretensions, to parents, to friends; you have separated yourself from all these things; you are dead to the world, & as Saint Paul says, *buried with JESUS-CHRIST*. Thus having no more share in the world, you have withdrawn yourself, to have nothing to do but to mind your perfection, & your salvation to work out & secure. God then ought to be the end you propose to yourself in all your actions, in all your designs, in such a manner, as to render all other things indifferent to you. Your employs will change, your actions will vary, but your aim ought always to be the same & invariable. To day you have the care of the Gate; in three months they will give you that of the Infirmary. Another time you will be made Mistress of the Novices, or Procuratrix. Behold in what variety of actions you will pass your days; but in these different changes you ought not to change in yourself; you ought invariably to keep your intention of pleasing God. These exterior actions ought to be to you as a habit or veil, which you may put

on & of, without ceasing to be what you are. You must, as to your intention, be the same when, as portress, you go to give an answer at the Gate; as when, in quality of Infirmary, you carry broth to a sick Sister. These actions are very different, but your aim ought to be the same. To please God ought to be your only view.

XXXVI.

The very thought that you can do any thing agreeable to God, ought to extinguish in you all other views, all other desires, all other intentions, all other satisfaction, that are not conformable to the spirit of God. Consider that in your actions you can propose to yourself two things; the one to please God; the other to satisfy your self-love, by the complacency you have in what you do. I here ask you, which side do you choose? I will not be contented with empty words for many say they will only act for God, & at the same time seek themselves no less; let your heart speak. Once more then, which side do you choose? Is it to content your own self-love, you would do this or that; or is it to follow the will of God. Let this motive destroy all others, that are not conformable to it; feed yourself with this resolution, & spoil not so good an intention, by mixing any other earthly views, & since it is God you have a mind to please, do it so, that he alone may have all the glory & all the honour of what you do; let neither self-love, nor any creature divide it with him; since nothing can be put in comparison with God.

RELIGIOUS.

XXXVII.

251

What can be more honourable & more comfortable to you, than God's vouchsafing to approve of what you do, & accepting of it as a service & an honour you render him ! Here you ought to admire his infinite goodness & mercy. God is a being so great, so holy, so perfect, so far above us ! We are nothing in his presence, we are nothing but dust, animated & preserved by his breath ; he vouchsafes, thro' an excess of his goodness, to stoop to us & to accept of our labours, as an honour we do him, & as objects of his divine complacency. An honour nevertheless he has no need of, which adds nothing to his happiness, & the benefit of our labours accrues all to us, the profit of which we reap with usury by the rewards he has promised us. Who can consider this, who can represent it to himself, without being astonished & rapt at it ? Ought not this thought alone to animate us with an extraordinary fervour, to inflame our hearts with an ardent desire of undertaking every thing for God ; of using all our endeavours to please him ; of never having any other view but his will & pleasure ? How great would be our infidelity & ingratitude, if after this consideration, we dared to do any thing for an end that may not be referred to God.

XXXVIII.

I say more, consider that from morning till night you may act to please God ; that there is not a moment in the day, but you may please him. That going only a step, speaking a necessary word, refraining from

252 THE PERFECT

an idle one, raising up your heart to him for a moment, in performing an act of obedience, you may be agreeable to him. I go still farther, consider that in eating, in sleeping, in being at recreation, you may be agreeable to God; if you do these things in due order. Consider in short, that by multiplying your intentions thro' the motives of different virtues, in multiplying your desire & your thoughts to please God, you become still more agreeable to him; you augment your merit in his sight, and there is nothing even to the least thought, the least sentiment, the least desire, one single step for him, but what he remembers, & makes himself accountable to us for it. And after so great a honour, so precious an advantage of serving such a Master, so glorious a fortune you may acquire in his service; how can you have any other view than that of pleasing him? How can you propose to yourself any thing, that is not according to his good will & pleasure?

XXXIX.

A Religious who has not a purity of intention, & who in what she does, proposes to herself any thing else but God; is exposed to a great deal of uneasiness of mind. Obedience becomes irksome to her, as well as that belongs to Religion; at least her peace will only last as long as every thing happens according to her will; & then she will have the regret of having acted & worked only to satisfy herself. If this Religious seeks her content elsewhere than in God, whatever she does, or whatever she is commanded, must

according to her inclination, which however happens only by chance, & but very seldom; or her will must be contradicted; & that cannot be without her suffering. It is not the same of a Religious, who places all her satisfaction in pleasing God; sin alone can disturb her peace. As in all other things she only looks upon & considers the pleasing of God, so she finds all her satisfaction in it; & this, without doubt, is the reason why those persons, who are truly interior, possess themselves on all occasions, preserve every where an admirable evenness of mind, & have a meekness & modest gaiety that does honour to virtue, & renders it lovely & amiable. Whereas those who seek themselves in what they do, are subject to act by capriciousness, want meekness & patience, to murmur, to be troubled, to be dissipated; because they do not always find what they desire, or cannot content themselves as much as they desire.

XL.

Our own inordinate or superfluous desires are the ordinary causes of our troubles. You have nought to desire but to shun sin, practise virtue, please God, & work out your sanctification. You ought to be so little concerned at any thing else, as only to attend to God, in as much as it has any reference to the glory of God, & to the saving of your soul. You then without desire of any transitory thing; look upon yourself in this world, as a person on a river side, who sees, with indifference, the water run, without thinking of stopping; in the same manner see all temporal things pass away, employs, labours, work,

254 THE PERFECT

conversations, news &c. &c. without cleaving to any of them with an attachment of heart. Wish only for the glory of God, & your sanctification; banish from your heart all other desires that may rise in it. As many as you nourish in you, they will turn out many serpents to devour you; in suppressing them, you will find God, & your own quietude.

XLI.

You would quite mistake my meaning, if under pretence of indifference for all passing things, you should acquit yourself ill of what you do, or do it with negligence; I would not have you attach yourself to any thing, but I would not also have you neglect any thing of what your duty obliges you to do. Disengagement of heart demands, that you should not cleave to this employ, or to this work; but that it be indifferent to you to what employ, or to what work you are set; & that you be always ready to accept, or to quit it when required. The will of God is, that as long as you are employed, you should acquit yourself of it the best you can, because you ought to do it purely for God; & what you do for so great a Master ought neither to be done with disgust or negligence.

XLII.

You ought to observe the same evenness of mind as to your exercises of piety, without attaching yourself to them on the one side thro' your own will, or omitting them on the other thro' disgust, or performing them with negligence thro' a misunderstood indifference. Examine a Religious who has not a true liberty of heart, & who, by her own choice

attached to her spiritual exercises ; if obedience or charity obliges her to leave of her meditation ; or if the Superior refuses her leave to go to Communion , when she has a desire to do it out of devotion. She is sad , she murmurs & grumbles in her heart : she complains & shews her bad humour. But she that has a true liberty of heart , seeking only God in her prayers & Communions , abandons the one , & deprives herself of the other with submission , when the orders of obedience or charity require it , & willingly sacrifices her own will to God , even in those things , that appear to her the most desirable & the most comfortable according to the rules of conscience.

XLIII.

This is a delicate point , & by which a strong , solid virtue , a virtue purged from all self-love , a virtue that purely seeks almighty God is known from one that is feeble , weak , unsteady , & in which our own will has greater sway than that of God. The Superior , of whom you asked leave to go to Communion , did not think proper , & even sent you away abruptly ; if your piety is solid , you would receive this refusal with submission , with humility ; & would make an offering to almighty God of the comfort you would have had in going to Communion. But if your virtue is weak & mixed with a seeking of yourself , you will be sensibly touched , even to tears , at the refusal of your Superior ; you will give yourself up to melancholy , or to murmuring ; you will resolve in your heart to ask nothing of her for the future ; & what

256 THE PERFECT

is worse , you will rather , when occasion offers , deprive yourself of going to Communion , than run the risk of being refused asking her leave.

XLIV.

I will give you a new name , but a name full of mystery ; an admirable name , that will be continual lesson of holiness to you. It is that which the Lord told Marias should be given to Jerusalem : *Thou shalt be no more call'd* (Says he c. 62. v. 4.) *Forsaken , & thy land shall be no more call'd Desolate , but thou shalt be call'd my will in her.* Behold the name you ought to bear ; that is to say , you ought to be so obedient to the will of God , so exact to fulfil it , so punctual to regard it in all things & so to make it the rule of your conduct in whatever state or disposition you find yourself , that it may be said of you , not that you are Reverend Mother Mistress of Novices Procuratrix &c. but only that you are her , in whom is the will & pleasure of God : & she expresses it more clearly ; her , who in whatever place she is put , has no other view , but to accomplish & fulfil the will of God. The Angel Raphael having made himself known to Tobias said to him : (Tob. c. 12. v. 19.) *I seem'd indeed to eat & to drink with you but I use an invisible meat & drink , which cannot be seen by man.* Thus in some measure you ought to be. You eat indeed with your Sisters , you converse with them ; you are seen going to your Cell & coming out working with the rest , or at recreation ; but in all these different exercises , you ought to nourish yourself spiritually with an invisib

eat; you ought to have but one view, one intention, that serves as a continual food to your soul; & this view ought to be nothing else, but the intention of doing & accomplishing the will of God.

XLV.

Live in such a dependance on the will of God, that you may not know how to will any thing, but what God wills. Your heart, as may be said, ought to breath nothing but this entire acquiescence, & this perfect abandoning of yourself, to all that providence may ordain, or permit in your regard. There is nothing but sin, that comes not from God; all the rest comes to us from him, as from a source of goodness; & that ought to be enough to make us hate, detest, & fly sin with all our might, & to make us submit to all the rest. Religious who has in view this divine will in all things, & who submits to it with a good heart, walks in the strait way, the sure way, the short way that leads to God. If she knows how to keep herself stedfastly in this view & submission, she will, in a short time, make a great progress in an interior life, & God will favour her & assist her with most singular graces. Harken to the humble prayer which the soul makes to JESUS-CHRIST, in the book of the Imitation of him, (P. 3. c. 15. 3.) & conform yourself to it. "Grant me, most merciful JESUS, always to will & desire that which is most acceptable to thee, & which pleaseth thee best. Let thy will be mine, & let my will always follow thine, & agree perfectly with it. Let me always will or not will the same with thee;

258 THE PERFECT

„ & let me not be able to will any otherwi
„ than as thou willest or willest not. „

XLVI.

To practise this conformity to the will of God as we ought, it is not enough to be in an habitual conviction, that all that happens in this world, sin excepted, comes from God; we must also make the application of it in the particular events that befall us; & as we have a greater difficulty to submit to our crosses, it is then we ought to endeavour to know the will of God, & humbly submit our own to it. Does the Superior refuse you what you asked her; has a Sister forgot to do for you what she promised; should what you have undertaken not succeed; you ought to consider that all happens by the order of God, & that ought to be sufficient for you to submit your will in peace & with all humility.

XLVII.

What commonly hinders us from submitting our wills is, that in what happens crosses & thwarts our desires & inclinations, we consider more the creature than God. Now we attribute the refusal given us to the bad humour & capriciousness of the Superior. Now we believe the Sister would not do what she promised, because she has neither charity nor friendship for us; then we think another has said so & so of us out of malice, & expect to vex & trouble us; & hence we give ourselves to murmuring, animosity, resentment, & impatience; & all conformity to the will of God is vanished. It will be always so as long as we mind the creature. The best way is to consider nothing but the will of

God, & to say with Job: *The hand of the Lord hath touched me.* Let us without ceasing raise up our minds above all creatures; let us fix our views on God, & unite our wills to his. The devil, in concert with our nature, will always suggest to us to attribute to the creature what vexes us, to make us conceive an aversion & hatred for her who crosses us, and to hinder us practising submission & patience; but grace will always inspire us to mind the will of God, that we may submit ourselves to it, & sanctify ourselves by our submission.

XLVIII.

You will perhaps answer there are some things, in which you cannot perceive the will of God, since they only happen to you thro' the faults & sins of others. For, you may say, when a Sister raises a story of me; jests & ridicules me; speaks ill of me; when another talks to me with impatience, mortifies me with biting words; they are, without doubt, sins; & I cannot discover the will of God in them, nor by consequence submit myself to it, since God wills not sin, & can be no ways the author of it. It is true, the sins against charity which this or that Sister has committed in your regard, come not from God; but God, who conducts all to wise & good ends, & who even knows how to make the sin he permits to happen, turn out to his glory, wills that this sin of this Sister should serve to make you practise meekness & patience; & it is this will of God you ought to consider, & to which you ought to conform yourself, and say to yourself; God

260 THE PERFECT

permits this Religious to make use of these disagreeable words to me, that I may practise patience. His will was not, that she should commit this fault; but in not hindring her from doing it, his will is I should bear it with meekness. If any thing in this ought to trouble me, it is the fault she has been guilty of, & which I ought to excuse, as much as is in my power. But for my being sensibly touched at it, as it regards me, is what I ought to hinder, because God thus permitted it only to exercise my virtue.

XLIX.

What ought I to think, you may ask again, if what I ask is good, & it is refused me? Can I there discover the will of God? I would, for example, do some particular penance because it seems to me, that God interiorly invites me to it; or I would make longer Meditations than ordinary, because I find my thoughts easily dissipated in the office I am in, & that I stand in need of more time to recollect myself; or I would go to Communion oftener than the others, because I have an ardent desire of it, & I see I have a great necessity of strength than any body else, which I can't better obtain than by approaching to the holy Eucharist; & notwithstanding all, neither the Superior, nor the Director, will permit me to do it. Can I think this happens by the will of God? Does it not rather seem to be precisely the will of the creature? For if God does not will, that I should do these penances, say the prayers, or go more frequently to Communion, why does he inspire me with the desire of it?

is I answer again, that you ought to look upon what is prescribed you by your Director, Confessor, or Superior as coming from God, preferably to your own inspiration, or your own particular desires; for unless the persons, who have the care of your conduct, should ordain you any thing contrary to the will of God or of the church, or contrary to your vows & rules, which without doubt will not happen, you ought to take their word for the sign of the will of God in your regard, & make your own desires & lights yield to what they ordain. The Saints never thought, spoke, or acted otherwise; & when the Scripture tells us that almighty God prefers obedience to sacrifice, it gives us to understand, that obedience ought to go before every thing we might propose to ourselves in our own particular case, whatever appearance of good we might see in it. And for this, when it was necessary to try if the conduct of a particular person, that seem'd singular, was truly from God, it was always brought to the proof by some humiliation, or by obedience, as it happen'd to the great Saint Simeon Stylites, whose life & history is universally known.

L.

We must then believe, you will add, that these desires of penance, of saying more prayers, of going oftner to Communion than the rest, are illusions, & not good motions that come from God; since it is not the will of God that we follow them, & that on the contrary his will, made known by that of our Confessor, or Superior, is, that we should

not follow them. This point would demand a long discussion, & would lead us beyond the limits we prefixed ourselves in the maxims. We will however endeavour to present it in a clear light, as briefly as we can. Without speaking here of the revelation of the holy Scripture, or of the special assistance & direction of the holy Ghost over the Church, it is necessary to know that the will of God may be manifested to us three different ways. 1°. By a particular inspiration. 2°. By the authority of Superiors, & generally of those persons who have a right to conduct & direct us. 3°. By an order of divine Providence. The particular inspiration must yield to authority; & authority must give way to the orders of Providence. For example, you have a thought & good motion to go to the Choir, & visit the blessed Sacrament; here is pious inspiration. In going thither you meet the Superior, who orders you instead of going to the Choir, to go & assist the Infirmary in her office. Here is authority, that hinders your following your pious inspiration. In going to the Infirmary you meet with a fever that renders you incapable to execute the orders of your Superior; & here is the disposition of Providence, to which authority must submit. We must then follow the inspiration, & look upon it as a mark of the will of God, when there is nothing but good & proper in it; but we must give the preference to obedience, as a mark still more sure of the will of God: because, tho' it may happen that the thought we have, or the motion we feel to do something that appears to

good, is from God ; we are always more
 certain of his will by obedience, than by what
 we think in our mind, or by the desires we
 feel in our heart ; & to do otherwise is to
 give liberty to our mind, & to open a wide
 door to all the illusions of the devil. And truly
 this obstinacy in their own private judgment,
 which has made so many Visionaries, that gave
 birth to Fanaticism, & brought forth all He-
 resies. Moreover there is an order to be ob-
 served in obedience ; we must prefer the will
 of our Superior to our own ; we must prefer
 the will of our Ecclesiastical Superior, to that
 of our common Superior ; in short we must
 prefer the Authority of the Church before
 that of our Ecclesiastical Superior, when this
 should have the misfortune to depart from it.
 This is the order established by JESUS-CHRIST
 in his Church, & which we cannot break
 without going astray. As to the particular
 desires we sometimes feel of doing this
 or that penance, this or that exercise, they
 may come from God, & may also come
 from ourselves. There are some persons who
 have a natural inclination for corporal au-
 steries, or who are push'd on to them thro'
 love ; or thro' ignorance think that vir-
 tue consists in nothing but these mortifica-
 tions, & then the desires they have of them
 do not come from God, but from them-
 selves. As to those that come from God, it
 does not follow he always wills our putting
 them in execution ; for a good interior mo-
 tion we feel, is one thing ; & the will of
 God, that we should put it in execution is
 another. The Superior commits to you the

264 THE PERFECT

care of the Pensioners ; & whilst you are ,
 virtue of your office , taken up in instructing
 them , you interiorly feel an impulse to
 & adore the blessed Sacrament , or to reco-
 lect yourself ; or in a word , find in yourself
 a great desire of entertaining yourself with
 God alone. Without doubt this is not a bad
 motion , nor an artifice of the devil , or
 self-love , as long as it does not hinder you
 complying with your duty , or render you
 obedience to the Superior in doing it , heavy
 & painful to you. But it does not follow , that
 the very moment you feel this desire , you
 should leave the Pensioners to follow it ;
 it is not the will of God you should. Hence
 good & pious motions are not always the
 marks of the will of God ; or rather it is not
 always the will of God we should follow
 them ; but we always ought to give the pre-
 ference to obedience , & to the obligations of our
 state , & of the office in which we are placed.

LI.

What we have just said is a principle
 constant in an interior life , & so well ground-
 ed on the experience of most holy persons
 that were we to follow another way , we should
 fall into great illusions. The good order of
 the Monasteries would be ruined , & great
 disorders would often happen in the regula-
 rity of the house , the more the Religion
 of it were favoured with particular graces
 which no body will dare to advance. For
 example , here is a Religious very punctual
 faithful to God , & whom God favours with
 most sensible & most particular graces ;
 may sometimes happen to her in the midst

er exterior occupations, in which she is
 taken up out of obedience, that almighty God
 should communicate himself to her by such
 rarely & pressing inspirations; or should give
 her so great a desire of adoring him, or of
 collecting herself in him, that was she to
 follow the impulse, she would immediately
 leave off her work, & would go strait to
 choir, there to prostrate herself before the
 blessed Sacrament, & to pour out her heart
 in amorous ejaculations & ardent desires of
 union with God. But who does not see
 that was she to do it, she would go against
 obedience, & by consequence against the
 will of God. And therefore, as we have seen,
 the Saints, feeling the same strong & power-
 ful attractions, used humbly to beg of God
 to moderate them, that they might not be
 hindered by them in what they were doing
 in their office, or out of obedience. And we
 read of Saint John of the Cross, that sometimes
 finding himself in a rapture, as it were, &
 out of himself, he used his utmost efforts to
 divert himself from it, when he was obliged
 to converse with any body. And therefore
 devout people, feeling also in themselves some-
 times extraordinary transports of joy in God,
 which, if alone, they would willingly give
 full scope to & indulge themselves in, endea-
 vour to moderate them, lest any thing should
 appear in the presence of those with whom
 they are obliged to converse.

LII.

We must here remark as to these desires &
 good motions which come from God, that
 when it is not his will we should entirely fol-

266 THE PERFECT

low them, as when we are hindered by obedience, it does not follow that we ought absolutely to reject them, or look upon them as useless. For 1°. We are permitted to follow them in part, when obedience is no obstacle. 2°. In not following them in order to practice obedience, we have the merit of our good will, & the merit of obeying. 3°. They always keep us in good dispositions, & nourish affection for those virtues, or exercises of piety which they regard. You have, for example, a great desire of using some corporal austerities, & you suppose this desire comes from God. Hitherto all is right. But if your Superior or your Confessor, of whom you ask leave to do & perform them, do not give their consent, you ought then to submit yourself to their will, which is to you an Intemperer of the will of God; & you will have the merit of your good desire, & of your obedience. I say more, this good desire ought not to be altogether fruitless in you, & you ought to follow it in part, after this manner: you ask leave, for example, to fast thrice a week, & it is not granted you; you ought not to do it either once or twice: but you may very well make this good desire serve to mortify your senses, & your passions more than you do; to repress vain curiosity, an over great eagerness of talking &c. This is what no one will certainly forbid you; you will perfectly follow the will of God, that of your Director or Superior, in turning that way the desire you had of mortifying your body. The same may be said of the desire you have of making longer Meditations.

ons, or of saying more prayers than the
 ft, which you are not permitted to fol-
 w: make use of it to recollect yourself
 ore than you do; to raise your heart up oft-
 er to God, to hinder your giving way to
 tractions & dissipation: you will enter
 hereby into the design of God, & reconcile
 ur desire with the laws of obedience. As
 is an important matter, & which may
 eady serve to hinder you from all illusions,
 o allay certain anxieties that may start up,
 to the good desires you are not always
 mitted to follow, I will add two other
 mples that will render these truths more
 sible to you. Let us suppose a Missioner
 a Priest, who by obedience is appointed to
 Ministry & salvation of souls, & who, in
 midst of his functions, finds a great desire
 retirement. It does not hence always fol-
 y, that he must follow this inspiration in
 ndoning his functions, to which he was
 ly'd by the authority of his Superior; but
 ought to make use of it to hinder himself
 m dissipation, & to keep himself in recol-
 ion & a disengagement of heart in the
 dle & hurry of his exterior occupations,
 ch however good & holy, may too much
 ract him, or throw him into a dissipation,
 some other attach that is not of God. Let
 also suppose a person, that has a great de-
 of being a Religious, but has neither
 means nor the strength; these obstacles
 ht not to render this desire useless; but
 being able to fully accomplish it, she
 do no better than to practise religious
 es in the state she is in, & as much as

268 THE PERFECT

the duties of this state will permit her. It is easy to make the application of these to examples ; & they may serve you as a rule, the different desires of piety you may have & have not the power to follow & put in execution.

LIII.

As Religious ought not to seek for dispensations with anxiety , nor procure them without necessity ; so Superiors ought not to grant them without a just reason. But if prudent charity guides these ; & the love of regularity , & an humble submission serve as a rule to the others , all will be in order , the dispensations will be approved of by God. A vigilant charity is necessary in a Superior that makes her attentive to the health of her subjects ; that prevents their necessities , does not give them room to complain of her negligence , or of her too great strictness & severity. And the Superiors , who are either of an indolent , scrupulous or severe temper ought greatly to observe this , that they do not fall thro' excess or defect. But on the other side , we can but blame the obstinacy of some Religious , otherwise good & pious who can't bring themselves to yield to the orders of their Superior , when she thinks it necessary to dispense with them in some regular austerities on account of their indisposition & weak health ; & who , instead of submitting , argue the case with her , oppose numberless reasons , & perhaps often at the expence of simplicity & sincerity , & will only give up & obey by constraint ; or else by repeated importunities extort at length

from the Superior a consent to what they desire. Alas! You, who do thus, what do you think to have gained in obliging your Superior to condescend to your desires? You have brought her to your own will, & you have not done the will of God.

LIV.

Transports of joy, to which we abandon ourselves with dissipation, should they even be for the success of any thing concerning the glory of God, are more the signs of self-love, & of a complacency entirely natural, than of a pure zeal. A Religious, who is interior, rejoices in the Lord with moderation, & modesty, & glorifies his divine will with gratitude, & without dissipation. You have gained a Pensioner to God, that is imbued with the spirit of the world; & you have so well succeeded with the assistance of Gods grace, that she is the most pious of her companions, & edifies the whole community. A great comfort to you. But if your joy is so excessive, that you can neither think nor speak of any thing but this conquest; it is much to be feared that self-love & vanity are crept in, & that you do not serve to God, in spirit & in truth, the glory that is due to him. Again, let us suppose all your Monastery were very desirous, that a young Lady of birth & merit would be a Religious, & you wished for it more than any one, because you educated & brought her up. She at length declares herself according to your wishes. It is doubtless permitted to rejoice in the Lord on so good an acquisition; but if you give way to your joy

so far as to be dissipated, so far as to let your mind be taken up with it in time of prayer, & to discourse of it in time of silence; I do not perceive therein any pure zeal for the glory of God, which is modestly recollected, and regular.

LV.

On the same principle we ought to conform ourselves to the will of God in what we undertake for his glory, when it does not succeed as we wish. A too great affliction in such cases would not be acceptable to him, & the want of resignation would shew a defect in the intention. You are Mistress of the Novices, or of the Pensioners; you apply yourself very carefully to bring them up in piety; but they so little correspond to your care, that you seem to have laboured in vain. Will you not abandon yourself to chagrin, to uneasiness, to grief? Will you not grow tired of your office? Will you not sigh many times a day after the moment of your being freed from it? Will you not solicit the Superior to take you out of it before the time? But why are you thus troubled & cast down? What is it God demands of you, but that you employ your care, & neglect nothing that may conduce to bring up your Young in virtue; & afterwards that you leave the success of it to him? It is not of the good success you are to render an account, but of the care you have taken, or neglected to take; & when you have given all your attention to it, tho' without fruit & success, you will not be less recompensed for it, than if you had produced so many Master-pieces of perfection.

LVI.

But what, you will reply, can I without grief see so much pains lost? Can I see the pensioners profit nothing of the education, I endeavour to give, without being troubled? Can I see the Novices, who are the hopes of Religion, so slothful, so dissipated, so intractable, so inattentive to their duties, by all my representations, without it's giving me the greatest anxiety? Yes you can see it, you ought. We ought not in effect to be sensible to the faults of others, especially those, whose conduct is committed to our care; otherwise there would be no more fervent zeal, no more reason to weep & lament the sins of our neighbour. But we must not give ourselves up to sorrow, & lose courage as you do, nor must we want submission to the will of God: Do then your best; use all your care; employ one time for weakness, another severity; but above all to prayer at the feet of JESUS; & lose the peace of your soul, should you see God does not permit you to succeed:

LVII.

This is the will of God, says S. Paul to the Thessalonians, (1. Ep. c. 4. v. 3.) *your sanctification*. O how comfortable are these words, with what a love ought they to inspire us to this adorable will? Who can refuse to submit & conform himself to it? What efforts ought we not to make to follow it most faithfully? Whatever cross happens to you; sickness, the loss of a parent, of a friend; humiliation, a contradiction; think immediately, that in these different accidents the

272 THE PERFECT

will of God is your sanctification ; & let this consideration serve to comfort you, & to make you correspond to those designs of mercy, which God has upon you. Whatever also God demands of you, either by good inspirations, by the orders of the Superior or of your Confessor, be ready to do it with a good heart. Never forget, that the will of God in all this is your sanctification. What do you pretend in resisting it ? Is it to sanctify yourself ? But can you ever compals that without conforming yourself to what God ordains ? Will you not rather go astray from the road that leads to true sanctity.

LVIII.

Some, rather than comply with what they find Almighty God demands of them, endeavour to shake off the thoughts of it, for fear of being obliged to conform themselves to it ; as if God did not see therein their bad intention, & their want of sincerity. O how deplorable is this ! Ought we to think it hard to follow the will of God, who, in what he demands of us, has no other end but to conduct us to heaven ? Were we to ask them ; are you desirous to sanctify yourselves ? What would they answer ? Nothing but an excess of madness, & libertinism can prompt them to say they would not. If they will ; how comes it to pass, that by a manifest contradiction in their sentiments, they will not conform themselves, to what God almighty proposes to arrive at it ? You will immediately answer, you can save yourself in keeping the commandments ; but that it is too difficult to follow the will of God, that solicits

presses you to work at your perfection. Alas! is this the language of a Religious? Are you not obliged by your state to tend to perfection? And if you renounce to it, what can you hope in abusing so many means of salvation, so many graces, & by living in a formal opposition to the designs God had in your regard, in calling you to Religion? What can you, I say, hope for or expect, but deplorable falls, that will precipitate you into an abyss of perdition.

LIX.

If you have not so much wit, so much address, such talents as others; if you cannot be so useful as they in the Monastery; if habitual indispositions & infirmities put you out of a condition of being serviceable to Religion; why do you afflict yourself? God is our Master, his will ought to be our rule; & since it conducts every thing to our salvation, that ought to be sufficient to console you. How know you, what you would do, had you all the brilliant & useful qualities, which you envy in your Sisters? Perhaps they would puff you up with vanity, & your pride would render you insupportable to others, & you would lose yourself. Remember it is said (Mark 7. v. 37.) of JESUS-CHRIST: *He hath done all things well*; & acknowledge the particular disposition of his wisdom & of his mercy in your regard, even in depriving you of those talents, you lament the want of. And therefore the devout soul speaking in the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, [Bj. c. 22. n. 4.] to this divine Master says: O Lord, I take it for a great benefit, not to

„ have much , which outwardly & according
 „ to men , might appear praise-worthy &
 „ glorious. „ This is a great subject of fear for
 the Religious who value themselves on their
 wit , & who would , by it , & by other ta-
 lents they have , excell above the rest in the
 Monastery ; & at the same time , is no less a
 subject of consolation for those whom God
 has not favoured with these advantages , &
 whom he thereby keeps in humiliation. It
 is no matter if others are at the head , &
 they have only the lower rank , as people that
 do no service to the Monastery ; if they are
 humble as much as they are humbled , we
 look upon them as the best support of the
 house , & we fear not to be mistaken ; be-
 cause it is the pure gold of virtue , & not the
 tinsel of fine parts , that makes the riches &
 ornament of Religious houses.

LX.

Submit yourself in the same manner to the
 will of God , when you see others favoured
 with particular graces , with sensible feelings
 of devotion , with extraordinary gifts , & you
 are left in a spiritual dryness & aridity , in
 temptations , in tribulation ; when you see
 that it costs little or no pains to others , to
 practise what is good , & you have an ex-
 treme difficulty in it ; when others are gay , &
 content in the service of God , by the sweetness
 they find in it ; & you on the contrary , are
 obliged to use violence to yourself in it , &
 to have continual combats to fight ; submit ,
 I say , to the will of God. Think that , did God
 treat you as he does those whom you envy ,
 you would abuse his favours , you would

leave to them, & make them serve to nourish your vanity & self-love; & perhaps they might contribute more to your loss, than your salvation, by the abuse you would make of them. Say to almighty God with the devout soul in the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST: (B. 3. 17. n. 4.) "Lord, I will suffer willingly for thee whatsoever thou art pleased should befall me. I will receive with indifference from thy hand good & evil, sweet & bitter, joyful & sorrowful; & will give thee thanks for all that happens to me. Keep me only from all sin, & I will fear neither death nor hell. Cast me not off for ever, nor blot me out of the book of Life; & what tribulations soever befall me shall not hurt me.,"

LXI.

We depend on God, & we are continually under the wings of his Providence; this is a truth no one can doubt of; but this truth must pass to our very hearts, & make us have this dependance. This same dependance must be to us a tender motive of confidence, source of peace & consolation. When we consider that this God, on whom we entirely depend, loves us more than the best of Fathers; that his goodness surpasses all that we can imagine of it; that his mercy is infinitely greater than our wickedness; how can we want confidence in him; hope in any other but him; ever suspect him in the crossiest accidents; fail to be faithful to him in what he wills & demands of us; not have recourse to him with regret & humility, when we have had the misfortune to offend him? If

276 THE PERFECT

we also consider how powerful this God is on whom we depend, why should we, when the accomplishing his will is in question, let ourselves be hindered from it by the consideration of any creature? O how frivolous pretext is human respect in a Religious, it stops her from practising that perfect good that God demands of her! Can we put the authority of creatures in competition with that of God? Their Might with his Sovereign Power? Did heaven, hell, earth, the Universe entire rise up against you; what has you to fear under the protection of the living God? All creatures, in his sight, are infinitely less than an infant would be before an army of mighty Giants; & were they multiplied even to an infinity, all their strength would be nothing, but true weakness & impotence. See then if your fear is grounded, when you so far stand in awe of the discourse of creatures, as not to dare declare yourself to God? Ah! Did those Religious, who lead a lax life, let this verity penetrate deeply into their hearts, how great an advancement would be towards making them more regular. But it too often happens, that they mutually support each other in their laziness & dissipation, by the fear they have of one another.

LXII.

In imminent dangers we better understand & are more convinced of our dependance on God. Whence it comes that we have recourse to him with greater earnestness to be freed from a danger, that immediately threatens. But do we depend less on him at other times

in less critical conjunctures? Is he not at all times equally the Sovereign Lord of our health, of our reputation, of our life, of that is most dear to us, or of all we are? Can he not snatch us out of this world by sudden death, when we enjoy a perfect state of health, as well as take us out of it by a lingering sickness? The consequence of all this is, that at all times we ought to fear God, at all times we ought to have recourse to him, at all times we ought to put our confidence in him, to hope in him, since we depend on him, & that he is our bountiful Father.

LXIII.

A too great sollicitude disturbs the peace of the soul, & shews a diffidence in God, contrary to this amorous dependance, in which we ought to live under his paternal conduct. A Procuratrix, an Oeconomist would always find plenty in her Monastery; & without it, she is troubled, & trembles for the future. She must be vigilant, prudent, forecasting, for God demands it of her; but it is not his will it should be to excess, so as to give her weariness, & make her want confidence in him. Let her employ her care & industry for the maintenance of the Monastery; she will therein do her duty: but let her also accept, with submission & confidence in the providence of God, losses & bad harvests; & let her not abandon herself to a too great despair, as if there was no God in Israel. Who takes care of the birds in the air, can he forget his sacred Spouses?

278 THE PERFECT
LXIV.

Why are you so thoughtful & anxious about what may happen to you; & why do you not rely & trust to the goodness of God for what regards the future? If I was to be sick; if such a Religious was to be Superior; if my Director was to be taken from me. To what end all this needless solicitude? What do you pretend by it? Can you change any thing in the order of Providence, or prevent this uneasiness? Think only of profiting of the time present, by employing it in doing the will of God. If you should be sick, what God wills, will happen. If such a Religious, whom you dread, should be Superior, she will govern you as God would have her. If your Director should be taken from you, God will provide as he pleases. Repose yourself amorously on him for all that, & the like things, & live without diffidence under his beneficent hand. The more you abandon yourself to his good will, the more you will deserve his divine protection.

LXV.

The fear of not persevering in the practice of religious perfection, is one of the most dangerous temptations the devil makes use of to hinder our undertaking it. How do you know, says he to a Religious who has some desire of becoming interior, do you know whether you will persevere to the end? You will have laboured a long while; you will have overcome great difficulties; you will have made a Sacrifice to almighty God of all human & worldly consolations, which you might have enjoyed

life less retired ; you will have practised
 any mortifications ; you will have conti-
 nually tortured yourself ; & having passed
 many years in this painful state , you may
 perhaps into a mortal sin , which will
 deprive you of all the merit of what you have
 done , & for which you will not be the less
 damned : is it not then better to live at large ,
 to enjoy your liberty without so much con-
 straining yourself ? But who is so blind as not
 to see , that this is a pure artifice of the evil
 spirit ? Did God ever inspire such a diffidence
 in his goodness , & does he command us in-
 stead to hope in his help & assistance ? Take
 heed , that we only give way to these des-
 tructive counsels , when our sanctification is in
 question ; whereas it is extremely rare we do
 the same in our temporal concerns. Is the
 saving our soul , or our perfection in question ?
 The fear of not succeeding casts us down &
 discourages us , & thereupon we purpose to
 abandon the design : on the contrary , is our
 daily health , or some temporal interest in
 question ? The fear of losing either the one or
 the other inspires us with new courage to pre-
 serve them. Did any one ever see a person
 throw himself into a precipice before-hand ,
 without an apprehension he should throw himself
 there at the end of his days ? You then , who
 do not undertake this work of perfection
 without the doubt whether you shall persevere ,
 are at least the prudence of the children of
 this world ; think on your pious design , as
 they think in their temporal affairs. You fear
 you shall not persevere ; begin notwith-
 standing ; hope with confidence that God

280 THE PERFECT

will conduct you to a happy end ; rely upon his paternal goodness , & not upon your own strength , nor your own industry , nor on the help of any creature. As long as you confide in God , you have nothing to fear ; he never abandons those who hope in him.

LXVI.

We must work at our sanctification with patience , with humility , with diffidence of ourselves & with an entire confidence in God. We ought to fear not to succeed , not to persevere , because our enemies are numerous , & we are weak ; but this fear ought to be rational , wise , and discreet ; it ought never to outweigh a Christian confidence ; it ought to keep us humbled under the hands of God ; it ought to excite us to be more faithful , but never ought to make us lose courage. Fear is a virtue : “ The security of the Saints , says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST , [B. 1. c. 20. n. 3.] was always full of the fear of God. Neither were they less careful to be humble in themselves , because they were shining with great virtues & grace. ” If fear is pushed beyond the just limits of discretion , it degenerates into a fault or defect ; it becomes pusillanimity , faint heartedness , diffidence , despair ; & so far from pleasing God , it offends his goodness , & does considerable hurt to the soul. Fear must be mixed with hope ; & the one must temper the other , lest fear alone should dishearten , & hope alone make us presume ; which makes the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST say : [B. 1. c. 25. n. 1.] “ Thou must

serve a good & firm hope of coming to the crown, but must not think thyself secure, lest thou grow negligent & proud." And on this occasion he brings the example of a man troubled with this temptation we are speaking of, who, as he revolved these thoughts in his mind: "Alas! if I did but know that I should still persevere in the service of God! ", heard within him this answer: "And if thou didst know this, what wouldst thou do? Do now what thou wouldst then do, & thou shall be very secure; and immediately, says the same Author, being comforted & strengthen'd, he committed himself to the divine will, & his anxious wavering ceased; neither had he a mind any more to search curiously to know what should befall him hereafter; but rather studied to inquire what was the will of God well pleasing & perfect, for the beginning and accomplishing every good work.,"

LXVII.

An excellent means, which the same author proposes to encourage us in the service of God against the spirit of pusillanimity, and excessive fear & diffidence, is, to revive every day & reanimate our holy desires. "We ought, says he, (B. 1. c. 19. n. 1.) every day to renew our resolution, & excite ourselves to fervour, as if this day was the first of our conversion; & to say; help me, O Lord God, in my good resolution, & in thy holy service; & give me grace now this day perfectly to begin; for what I have hitherto done is nothing."

A Religious tempted with diffidence may with profit make use of this means, humbly presenting herself every morning before a mighty God, as if she only began to enter into his service; begging of him with an instance & profound humility, that he would vouchsafe to receive her for that day into the number of his servants; to preserve her from the misfortune of displeasing him, to grant her his grace, to persevere in his service the rest of the day. This practice performed with a sincere piety, & renewed every day, will draw down great helps upon her, will free her from the temptation, revive her drooping strength & courage.

LXVIII.

Another excellent means to keep ourselves fervent in the service of God is, to set ourselves a rule in our exercises, & in all our conduct; so that, besides the rule & distribution of time of the Monastery, we should prescribe to ourselves a particular one, that is more interior, than exterior, & that may help us to comply with that of Religion more faithfully & more perfectly. The Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. I. c. 19) has laid down one in few words, that may serve as a model for all those, who desire to become perfect, but principally for Religious persons. He prescribes. 1^o. To dispose in the morning how we ought to pass the day; this is what a Religious may do by a short examen or Meditation, or at morning prayer by then regulating in her mind all her actions of the day; by guarding herself against dangerous occasions, against her inclination

RELIGIOUS. 283

her passions, her faults, temptations, & above all against the vice that predominates in her, & by resolving not to let slip any occasion of practising virtue. He prescribes. 1°. To bridle the tongue, as a means easily to overcome the vices of the senses; & this is what a Religious may do by habitually keeping silence, by keeping herself retired in her chamber, or occupied in the office she is in; in avoiding so many goings & comings here & there, often without necessity; so much superfluous & dissipating talk, & generally, whatever may divert her from a holy recollection. He advises. 3°. Never to be idle, but to be either reading, or meditating, or praying, or labouring in doing some thing, that may be for the common good; & thus a Religious ought to spend her time, dividing it between her exercises of piety & her work; whether she does it in her own particular, or whether she has an office that regards the service of her Sisters, or the good of the Monastery. He advises. 4°. That if we cannot continually recollect ourselves, to do it from time to time. And thus a Religious ought sometimes in the day to retire into herself by recollection, or frequently to raise her heart to God in the midst of her exterior occupations, to keep herself habitually in the fervour of devotion. He orders. 5°. To take care not to be slack in common exercises, & forward in particular ones, to teach a Religious to be faithful, pious, fervent in the exercises of the Community, not to neglect them, not to come to them the last, not easily to dispense with herself in

284 THE PERFECT

them without permission, not to prefer her particular devotions to them. He prescribes 6°. That having faithfully performed what was enjoined, if any time remains, to give ourselves to ourselves, according as our devotion inclines us; which takes in, or contains three points of consequence. Whereof the first is, always to prefer the common duties and obedience to our particular practice of piety. The second is, if having acquitted ourselves of our regular duties, any time should remain, not to spend it in vain things. The third is, to employ this time remaining in recollecting ourselves in God, which a Religious has no difficulty to do. On the contrary, she finds her comfort & consolation in it, & a sort of an indemnification for what she may have lost in her exterior occupations.

LXIX.

A Religious that would apply herself to observe thoroughly the rules, we have just copied from the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, that is to say; who in the morning would regulate in her mind the conduct she ought to observe in the whole day, either to avoid the faults she ordinarily falls into, or to practise those acts of virtue, she foresees the occasion of; who in the day would occupy herself in the common exercises of piety, in work, & in her office, would endeavour to acquit herself of all with fidelity, in view of pleasing almighty God, & of profiting by it herself; who would often raise up her heart to God above the midst of her external occupations; who

would keep herself retired, recollected, & silence; & who in short, would turn to advantage the time she has to spare, by employing it in prayer or Meditation, either in private, or before the blessed Sacrament; a Religious, I say, who would stick to this rule of conduct, would in a little time make a great progress in an interior life, & acquire a great perfection. We do not here propose any thing extraordinary, that is above the strength of any Religious whatever, who has a common share of health; this rule is compatible, & may be observed with all other rules of the house; it may be practised in an easy Abby, as well as in an austere Order; by Religious charged with exterior occupations, as well as by those who have none. The Benedictine, the Carmelite, the Ursuline, a Religious of the Visitation, a Poor Clare, a Hospital Nun may conform to it without going against their constitution.

LXX.

What has been said, you may tell me, of employing in prayer, & recollecting one's self in God, the time that remains, seems to be impossible, or very hard to reduce to practice; for it is very seldom that, after performing all ones regular duties, any spare time remains; besides if there does, it is the least one can do, to employ it in some amusing lecture, or in some other thing that recreates the mind after ones work, & so many exercises of the Community, which are more or less fatiguing, without being obliged to return again to prayer. This would be laying

ones self under a too great constraint, and would wear one out in a short time. I answer first, that if after having performed all your duties, no time remains; nothing is demanded of you. But take notice of the excellent lesson, which the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST gives: [B. 1. c. 20. n. 1.] “
 „ thou wilt, says he, withdraw thy self from
 „ superfluous talk & idle visits, as also
 „ from giving ear to news & reports, thou
 „ wilt find time sufficient to employ thyself
 „ in good Meditations. „ I answer secondly
 that commonly it is thro’ indevotion &
 spirit of tepidity, that we think it hard to
 employ what time may remain, in recollecting
 ourselves in God. As we relish more the
 things of the world than those of God, we
 had rather employ our time in talking, or in
 some diverting reading, than in prayer. But
 an interior Religious finds her consolation
 in recollecting herself with & in God; she
 tends to him, as to the center of her heart
 & it would be using a sort of violence to
 her inclination, to hinder her from following
 in this, the bent of her piety. Harken once
 more to the excellent advice of the same
 Author: (ibid.) “ Seek, says he, a proper time
 „ to retire into thyself, & often think of the
 „ benefits of God. Let alone curiosities
 „ read such matters as may rather move
 „ thee to compunction, than give thee occa-
 „ sion.... The greatest Saints avoided the
 „ company of men as much as they could
 „ to live to God in secret.

LXXI.

An interior Religious looks upon every

day, as a Holy-day she celebrates, not by abstaining from work, but by her application to glorify God in all her labours, till she enters into the Feast of Eternity; after which she aspires by the affection of her heart & the ardour of her desires. Moreover, she applies herself to solemnize holily the different Feasts of the year, according to the spirit of the Church; & supports herself, from one Solemnity to the other, by the practices of piety, that serve to prepare her for them, & to make her reap the benefit of them, & nourish her devotion all the year round. This is what the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST teaches us saying: (B. I. c. 9. n. 6.) " About the time of the principal Festivals, we must renew our good exercises, & more fervently implore the prayers of the Saints. We ought to make our resolution from Festival to Festival, as if we were then to depart out of this world, & to come to the everlasting Festival. Therefore we ought carefully to prepare ourselves at times of devotion, & to converse more devoutly, and keep all observances more strictly, as being shortly to receive the reward of our labour from God. ,

LXXII.

Nothing is more pious & more beneficial to the soul, than to follow the spirit of the Church, in what we call the Ecclesiastical year; that is to say, in the disposition of her Feasts, more or less solemn, as the time appointed for penance, or for a holy joy in JESUS-CHRIST. Advent prepares & disposes us to celebrate holily the Birth of our Saviour

288 THE PERFECT

JESUS-CHRIST. The Octave of it, the Memory of his Circumcision ; that of the Epiphany , may serve & entertain us till Lent ; that holy time prepares us for Easter ; the Paschal time conducts us to the Ascension to Whitsontide , & to its Octave ; soon after comes the Feast of Corpus Christi ; then the Assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary ; in short, the Festivals of Saints are not wanting from that time to Advent. But what a source of good pious thoughts , of ejaculations to the heart towards God , of Meditations , of holy practices , does not an interior Religion find in these different times & different Feasts ? With what a fervour does she not prepare her heart in Advent , that **JESUS-CHRIST** may come & be spiritually born in her , by a greater effusion of his grace ? With what attention does she not attach herself , to keep her heart pure & without spot , & to adorn it with the flowers of all virtues , as being to serve for a cradle , wherein the Infant Jesus may repose with delight ? She resolves to prepare herself with an equal piety & industry , inspired by a holy love , for all solemnities of the year. There is no Feast of our Lord , or of our lady , that does not animate her with a tender & affectionate devotion ; no Life of the Saints , that does not edify her ; no time of the year , in which she does not keep up her piety , according to the design of the Church ; & in which she does not taste the sweetness & excellence , as in the precious advantages of Religion.

LXXIII.

The Mistress of Novices should thus cultivate

from her young to keep themselves in recollection & a holy fervour, from one time to feast till another; & propose those practices of piety, that may facilitate & render what we have said easy to them. It is advisable in the time of advent, for example, she should set them so many ejaculatory prayers a day; the subject whereof should be to sigh after the coming of JESUS-CHRIST, to their hearts; or so many acts of some particular virtues, which shine most in the infant-state of JESUS; as his meekness, his patience, his modesty, his humility, his resigning himself entirely into the hands of his Virgin Mother, and so in proportion in the other solemnities. But she must not propose a great number of those ejaculations & elevations of the heart to God, or practices of piety, as to clog their mind or overload their memory. Neither must these practices be above their strength, as for example, any severe corporal penances; but all things ought rather to be so proportioned to their age, character & dispositions; to the time or feast that is celebrated, as to engage them, that their devotion be never so little, to do as it were, of their own accord, with ease & comfort; that she may consequently have reason to presume that they acquit themselves of it with pleasure, alacrity, cheerfulness & profit to their own souls. Some extraordinary Communion ought to be granted to those, who perform this exercise best, in order to excite among them a holy emulation.

Almighty God does not always make use of the same means in the conduct of souls. Some there are, whose devotion is kept up by a multiplicity of practices. To others a few suffice, & a greater number would only trouble them in their pious disposition, & withdraw them from their inclination. It is impossible here to assign a fix'd rule; every Religious ought in this to follow the advice of a wise & prudent Director. It may be true, said that when the exterior practices of devotion are so multiplied as to become burdensome, we run a great risk of being disgusted, & of abandoning them, & sometimes we pass from one extreme to the other in such a manner, that after having undertaken too much, a disrelish & weariness induce us to sling them all up. We may here apply as a maxim what the excellent Author of the Imitation of JESUS - CHRIST says [B. I. c. 19. n. 5.] "In bodily exercises, discretion is to be had, nor are they equal, to be undertaken by all. . . . all cannot have the self same exercise; but this is more proper for one, & that for another. Moreover according to the diversity of times, diverse exercises are more pleasing, for some relish better on festival days, others on common days. We stand in need of one kind in time of temptation, & another in time of peace & rest. Some we willingly think on when we are sorrowful, others when we are joyful in the Lord. Here I must add, that we ought to help & assist the young Religious, in these practices

devotion, that serve to fix the natural constancy of young people, to exercise them in the practice of different virtues, to make them contract by degrees a holy habit of them; to render piety more easy to them by the variety of it's practices, & to carry them in short to God by a way so much the less dry & tedious, as these practices are more sensible, & as it were more palpable & perceptible.

LXXV.

Some souls almighty God draws to him self more particularly & independently of these multiplied exercises, otherwise very holy & very useful. For these persons live in a great a recollection, & have so great a facility of conversing with God, & tend to him with so tender & affectionate an inclination, that the multitude of practices & the methods of beginners would divert them from their bent, & prove, as may be said, a constraint to the conduct & influence of the Holy Ghost in them. But as this disposition of theirs is not a permanent state, they return to the ordinary methods, as often as their necessity makes them useful. Those who all on a sudden were transported by their attraction at the beginning of prayer, are sometimes obliged to make use of books, to furnish themselves with matter for Meditation. Those who, thro' attraction for recollection, had a difficulty to take of their thoughts from God, are forced to fight sometimes against distractions, & to use all their endeavours to think of him, & those, who in their contemplation, were absorpt as it were in the

292 THE PERFECT

consideration of the divine essence & attributes, are reduced to the necessity meditating on the four last things. In like manner we must not think, under pretext uniting ourselves amorously to God by recollection, that we are dispensed with from making formal acts of faith, of hope & other virtues; nor that it is permitted, under the same pretence, to keep ones self indifferent in time of temptation that attacks us; this pernicious principle would lead us into the greatest errors.

LXXVI.

The custom of making an eight or ten days retreat, every year, is piously established in almost all Religious houses. If it is not yours, I know not what to say; but you cannot do better than to introduce it by your example. What fruits may not a Religious reap from such a holy exercise! But we must perform it, not because it is the custom, or because others do it, & we will not yield to any of them in our exterior shew of piety, nor by constraint & because we are forced to it by the authority of the Superior, but sincerely to repair the spiritual losses we have suffered; to enter seriously into ourselves, & to know the true state of our conscience, & the disposition we find ourselves in, as to what regards the service of God. For this we must forget there is a world, & if possible, that we live in a Community. We must separate ourselves from all, at least in mind, & shut ourselves up in solitude with God alone, to consider in His presence, the moving truths & touching ve-

of our Religion; to judge ourselves rigorously on these important articles, & to draw from them the just consequences, both to our amendment, as well as to the renewing of our fervour. The books that are composed for spiritual retreats are full of instructions on this subject; we may include them all in saying, that when you begin a retreat, you ought to propose to have yourself in it, as if it was to be the last of your life.

LXXVII.

As a faithful correspondence to grace leads to holiness, so a resistance to it brings us to our ruin. May we not say to a Religious that abuses the graces of God, so abundant & numerous in her state, what JESUS-CHRIST said to the Samaritan woman: *If thou didst know the gift of God, & who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink? [Joan. 4. v. 16.]* We shew that we know very little the inestimable price of grace, the greatness & infinite goodness of him that gives it; & at the same time that we are guilty of the blackest ingratitude, & have a very bad & insensible heart, in not being touched with such a benefit, & above all in rendering it useless by our resistance. O how culpable is a Religious, who accustoms herself to neglect the inspirations, and interior good motions of grace, and who does not profit by any of the exterior means she has to sanctify herself! Can we look upon her life otherwise, than as on a concatenation of infidelities & resistances to the Holy Ghost? Hence springs the insensibility of many. From this pernicious habit of neglecting the

294 THE PERFECT

graces of God, we come to set so little value upon them, to take no notice of them, even go so far as to despise them, & rank them among the effects of our imagination. Hence faith grows weak; the very idea of virtue is blotted out of the mind; the heart becomes almost like an impenetrable steel & neither the amorous invitations of JESUS CHRIST, nor his threats or menaces make any more impression on us, if thus grown obdurate. Terrible situation of a soul, which by long habit of abusing the graces of God, has been conducted to this insensibility! Her situation is so deplorable, that considering a Spouse of JESUS-CHRIST in this condition, we have no other words to make use of in her regard than those of Jeremy sitting on the ruins of Jerusalem, & bitterly lamenting the fall of that great & magnificent City. Should any Religious know herself in this picture, let her not any longer harden her heart, but let her endeavour, as soon as possible, to return to God by a sincere repentance, lest death surprising her in this unhappy & dismal lethargy, she should experience the effect of the terrible commination, which God, in holy scripture, fulminates against such unfaithful souls. *You have despised all my counsels, & have neglected my reprehensions, I also will laugh in your destruction.* [Prov. I. v. 25. 26.]

LXXVIII.

A Religious that knows how to profit by the graces she receives from God, & of many means of salvation which his infinite mercy furnishes her with in her state, may raise herself to a high degree of perfection

What fruit ought she not to bring forth, in the Garden of the Celestial Sponse, being like a tree planted near the running & salutary waters of grace, fattened, if I may so say, with reading, with prayer, with good example, with the Sacraments, with interior pious motions, in a word, with the abundance of heavenly dews? Can she be poor in the midst of spiritual riches? Can she perish with hunger at the table which divine wisdom has prepared for her, & which is served with so great a profusion? Ah! you, who read this, study to husband well every grace, as an ambitious man does all the means that may serve to bring him to his ends. Let no one escape you, the least are always precious. The good use you make of all the grace, will make you merit more particular ones; & that you neglected, had you corresponded to it, would have acquired you another, with which you might have made a great progress in virtue. The misfortune is, we live in an alternative of infidelity to grace, of cooperation to it; & we often resist & neglect it, than correspond to it. And thus our virtue remains low, weak, crawling, & at the end of our course, we shall find ourselves without having corrected one single passion; whereas, had we been faithful to grace, we should have acquired an eminent virtue, & should die the death of the just.

LXXIX.

Be grateful, says the Author of the Imitation of Jesus-Christ, (B. 2. c. 10. n. 5.) For the least, & thou shalt be worthy to receive greater graces. Let the least be

296 THE PERFECT

„ to thee as something very great ; & thou
 „ most contemptible as a special favour. I
 „ thou consider the dignity of the giver , not
 „ gift will seem to thee little or contempti-
 „ ble : for nothing is little which is given
 „ by so great a God. „ This confirms what
 we have said ; & this is the disposition in
 which a Religious ought to be , as to the
 gifts of God. Whatsoever they are , exterior
 or interior , great or little , hidden or publick
 comforting or mortifying ; she ought to re-
 ceive them with an humble acknowledg-
 ment , to faithfully make a good use of them
 for her advancement in piety , & to take
 very great care not to lose any one by her
 negligence ; for almighty God will make
 her render an account of the graces we receive
 from his liberal hand , as well as of the sins
 we committed.

LXXX.

The first man render'd us all carnal &
 terrestrial by sin. JESUS-CHRIST came to make
 us all spiritual & celestial. In following the
 inclinations of the first man , we lead a life
 according to our senses & our passions. In
 following the maxims of JESUS-CHRIST , we
 lead a life according to the spirit. The first
 man taught us to cleave to the earth , & to
 esteem all that is temporal ; JESUS-CHRIST
 teaches us to disengage our affections from
 all transitory things , & to fix them on eter-
 nity. *The first man* , says Saint Paul , (1. Co-
 r. 15. vv. 47. 48. 49.) *was of the earth , earthly*
the second man from heaven , heavenly. Such
is the earthly , such also are the earthly :
such as is the heavenly , such also are they

heavenly. Therefore as we have born the image of the earthly; let us bear also the Image of the heavenly. Here is a great fund of instruction which the Apostle gives us, & by which he teaches us to put off the terrestrial man, that is our first father, & to put on the sacred characters of the celestial one, that is JESUS-CHRIST our Lord. In following the inclinations of the flesh, the allurements of the senses & passions, we shall resemble the first man. In renouncing to them & substituting in their place the practice of virtue, we shall be like to the second, & have his Spirit.

LXXXI.

You will only succeed in conforming yourself to JESUS-CHRIST, in as much as you are faithful to follow the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. You must enter into the school of this divine spirit, & be as docile to his instructions, as you would desire a young Pensioner under your care, to be to yours. Become a little child, under his law & under his doctrine. Be attentive to his voice, & therefore purge in yourself the spirit of the world, the love of nature, & the tumult of your passions, the means of recollection. Be obedient to this divine voice, & for that renounce the bad & unruly suggestions of your passions & of self-love, by the exercise of mortification. This divine spirit, in reality, will be to you as a severe Master, who will reprimand you every moment; who will let nothing pass; who will find a thousand faults to correct, which you never would have perceived; who will contradict your terres-

298 THE PERFECT

trial & low inclinations ; who will search into the most secret recesses of your heart to drive self-love from thence, as from its strongest entrenchments. His lessons sometimes will seem so difficult to follow, that you will not be able to do it, without an extraordinary violence ; for he will not flatter you, will have no regard for your sensibility or your delicacy. But *he will teach you all truth* (John. 10. v. 13.) that is, to renounce yourself, & to practise those virtues, that are most contrary to the vicious inclinations of nature. He will be like a consuming fire, that will penetrate into the very center of your heart, to purify & vivify it.

LXXXII.

Ah ! How different you will become from yourself, if you faithfully follow the instructions of this great Master ! What a marvellous change will be soon seen in you ? You was light, fickle, inconstant & dissipated ; you will be grave, serious & recollected. You loved to run about the Monastery, to lose your time, to talk vainly, to inform yourself with curiosity of all that passed ; to stand at the grate at all hours of the day ; you will be retired, employ'd, silent, entirely taken up with the care of your soul, & with performing your duties. You was sensible, rude, impatient, bantering, haughty ; you will be meek, patient, mild, affable, officious. You was slothful, lukewarm, negligent in the service of God ; you will be fervent, exact & regular. You will relish only spiritual things ; recollection, prayer, meditation & holy Communion, You was always seeking to gratify

yourself & indulge your sensuality; you will
 a pattern of mortification, & penance.
 such is the admirable reformation that will
 be made in you. You will be no longer the
 daughter of Adam, but a holy Spouse of
 JESUS-CHRIST.

LXXXIII.

You may ask, how can we know when
 is the Holy Ghost that instructs us, for as
 the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST,
 (B. 3. c. 15. n. 1.) "Every desire is
 not from the Holy Ghost, tho' it seems to
 a man right & good. „ It is true we are
 blindly to follow every good that comes
 to our thoughts; nor to believe ourselves
 inspired in every thing that presents it self to
 our mind, under the appearances of good;
 but we may know true inspirations by the
 three following characters. 1°. On the side
 of God; because his inspirations are com-
 monly accompanied with meekness, peace,
 tranquillity, & with a sort of assurance
 that it is he that speaks, so that one cannot
 ascribe it to one's self, nor shake off the
 thoughts of it, & in spite of the prepossession
 & false pretenses of self-love that would
 deceive us, we feel, when we enter into
 ourselves, & maturely weigh the matter at
 the feet of God, that it can be no other but
 that inspires it. 2°. On our own side,
 because we perceive that what is inspired is
 very suitable to our state, & can only turn
 to the advantage of our soul, withdraw
 from sin, make us practise solid virtue,
 lead us to perfection. Besides, these inspi-
 rations only trouble & disturb us in as much

as they are contrary to our passions & corrupt nature, & by faithfully following them we shall acquire a true peace of mind & tranquillity of conscience. 3°. On the part of the thing inspired. Because God does not inspire vain, useless, or superstitious things, nor what flatters the passions or self-love, but rather practices that tend to repress & mortify them; to correct our faults, to disengage us from the world, & from ourselves, to reform us according to the maxim & example of our Saviour JESUS-CHRIST, to lead us to the perfection of his holy love.

LXXXIV.

How many examples might we here bring of these admirable instructions of the spirit of God, & of his holy inspirations? A soul recollected & mortify'd in prayer & Holy Communion, receives so excellent, so marvellous, so luminous, & such comfortable ones, both on the reformation of her lesser defects, on the manner of practising virtue, & on the means she ought to choose to arrive at perfection; that the more she renders herself attentive to this divine voice, & the more docile she is in following it, the more she is visibly seen to grow in virtue. She finds wherewith to mortify herself where another would think of nothing, & indulging her humour. She practises an humble patience, where another would show nothing but uneasiness; she is industrious in finding out a thousand means to please God, where another would not so much as think of him. Who knows better the artifices of nature, the deceits of the evil spirit,

& evasions of self-love, than a soul
 taught by the Holy Ghost in prayer & me-
 ditation? Who knows better than her the
 way of always practising in the most perfect
 manner, humility, obedience, disengage-
 ment & religious poverty? Who knows bet-
 ter than her the difficult paths of a spiritual
 life, the mysterious ways of holy love, the
 different movements of nature & of grace?
 When the spirit of truth teaches, we soon
 become perfect & expert in the knowledge
 & practice of good. Thus we see simple
 souls that never thought of cultivating their
 mind by study, speak of God & of the
 practice of virtue with more solidity than a
 great genius can sometimes do, that has
 employed sciences without having applied
 himself to prayer; he will treat of it in a
 dry & superficial way, whereas the other
 will do it with a marvellous unction, that
 inspires devotion. We do not however pre-
 tend to prefer the knowledge of this soul to
 the learning of divines, & much less to that
 of the Holy Fathers, & Ecclesiastical Supe-
 riors, whom God has placed in his Church,
 to teach & instruct us in the rules of faith &
 good manners. This would be opening a
 door to fanaticism & to the errors of the
 excluded mysticks of our days. But we only
 compare the lights of this soul with those of
 another faithful, who do not give themselves
 to prayer, nor study to render themselves
 worthy by recollection & the exercise of
 virtues to receive in prayer the admirable
 instructions which God gives to those inte-
 rior souls who are faithful in hearing his

voice, & in following it. And with this caution we are to understand the words the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST who says (B. 3. c. 31. n. 2.) “ There is
 „ great difference between the wisdom
 „ an illuminated devout man, & the knowledge
 „ ledge of a learned studious scholar.
 „ more noble is that learning which flows
 „ from above, from the divine influence
 „ than that, which with labour, is acquired
 „ the wit of man. „

LXXXV.

Almighty God does not only inspire with good thoughts in time of prayer & holy Communion; he also often does in the particular actions of the day, either when we are to avoid some fault, or to practise some act of virtue. You are at recreation with your Sisters; an ingenious repartee made by another comes into your mind, which if you repeat, would make you pass for a witty person. But whilst you have a great desire of doing it, you have at the same time a thought to mortify yourself in not saying it. Here is a good inspiration. For firstly it is of no consequence that you should publish this ingenious thought, and secondly in keeping it to yourself, you do not expose yourself to the temptation of vanity & conceit; & you mortify self-love. In a word you make a sacrifice to almighty God of the pleasure you would have had in doing it. who does not see, that in all this there is good to be done, & that it is God that inspires you with it. In the same manner you have finished all that you was ordered to

have as yet some time that remains, which you may employ in what you please, & you have then a thought to go & visit the blessed Sacrament, you feel yourself interiorly pressed to go & recollect yourself before it, to pay your adorations to it, & ask those graces you stand in need of. Without any doubt here is a good inspiration. In following it, you no ways interfere with your ordinary duties; you do nothing against the will of your Superior; you perform an act of Religion, from which you may reap great benefit for your progress in virtue. What can or should you more to discern in it the spirit of God, & to conform yourself to it?

LXXXVI.

The same is not to be said of certain thoughts, whose object seems good, but which you cannot execute without going against obedience, or missing in your particular duties. You must, generally speaking, place them in the number of thoughts that come from ourselves, or which the devil suggests to deceive us under the appearance of good; or infine, if these thoughts come from God, we must say of them, what we find else where of the good motions which God does not require we should put in execution. For example, you are Mistress of Novices, & when you ought to be with them, you have a thought to go to your cell to read a book of piety that was lent you which you never read before. Howsoever justifying the reading of this book may be, it is not right you should leave your Novices to go to read it; & far from discovering in

304 THE PERFECT

it an inspiration of God, it is an artifice of the devil who seeks to divert you from your essential duty that obliges you to be with your Novices; or it is an effect of your own curiosity & of your self-love.

LXXXVII.

A proof that these inspirations do not come from God, is your being troubled, vexed & uneasy, when your Director or Superior will not permit you to follow them, you being tempted to act against their prohibition, & in short your besieging them in such a manner to obtain leave to put them in execution, as when you have a mind to take any corporal penance, that at length you extort their consent by your repeated importunities. We must have the same opinion of these inspirations, as the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, has of certain eager desires we have sometimes, & against which he would have us be on our guard. When thou feelest says he (B. 5. c. 11. n. 1.) „ Desires that often inflame thee & violently hurry thee on; consider whether it be for the honour of JESUS-CHRIST, or thy own interest that thou art more moved. If thou hast no other view but him, thou wilt be well contented with whatever he shall ordain; but if there lurks in thee any thing of self-seeking, behold this is it that hinders thee & troubles thee. „

LXXXVIII.

When an inspiration moves you to avoid some sin, or imperfection; you do not wait for any counsel or permission of your Director or Superior. Who doubts but that you ought

correspond to it ? Is there any necessity for an order or advice to shun what may be displeasing to God ? You have a longing to ridicule one of your Sisters ; & a thought comes into your mind to abstain from it ; there any thing to deliberate or boggle at ? You must immediately follow the inspiration , & take great care not to be unfaithful to it. The bell calls you to the office , you would willingly nevertheless continue your work a few moments longer ; but you feel yourself inspired to leave it of instantly to obey your rule ; do you stand in need of the advice of your Director to resolve upon it ? It is an inspiration which you must faithfully follow ; the more exact you are in the like occasions, the greater progress you will make in the perfection of your state.

LXXXIX.

We must not generally think the same of those inspirations that incline us to different practices of virtues. We ought to follow them when they have nothing out of the common ; nothing above our state & strength ; nothing contrary to the rules of discretion or obedience ; nothing that appears too singular ; because in these cases they are not contrary to the good order of the Monastery, & have nothing that can make us doubt whether they come from any other principle than God. You pass by a Room which is empty , curiosity moves you to look in , but you have the thought not to do it , & to satisfy yourself in it. This is a good inspiration you must follow. Something is set before you at table , that is not according

to your taste, you would by your looks shew the dislike you have of it; but it comes into your mind not to shew any. This again is good inspiration you ought to obey. A Saint in short has said something of you at which you are angry; you would in meeting her give her to understand by your serious look your displeasure; but you are inspired to shew her on the contrary a meek & affable countenance; this is once more an inspiration which you ought faithfully to comply with. These different examples may serve you as a rule in the like & similar cases but when any practices of piety, that are either singular or extraordinary are in question; & when you doubt whether you should obtain leave for them, if you asked it; as to fast every saturday; or to impose on yourself some other austerity; or to make some particular vow; you ought never to undertake them without having asked the advice of your Confessor, the Director, or Superior. And you ought to propose it to them in such a manner as not to be willing to extort their permission by craft & importunity, but barely to seek to know from them what God wills you should do in such cases.

XC.

Almighty God demands of some persons things that are above the ordinary way, which even seem contrary to the rules of discretion. We have seen Saints of a very weak complexion & bad health undertake great austerities & even excessive ones, having so strong an attraction to them, so pressing & cogent an inspiration, accompani-

with so lively a conviction that it came from God, as not to be able to dissemble or withstand it. These cases are rare, & notwithstanding the force of the inspiration, we see those holy souls were not without taking the advice of those, who were charged with the care of their spiritual conduct. Whence we may learn, that the Spirit of God that moves us to great & sublime things, inclines us at the same time to obedience & dependence. But, altho' we find examples of these inspirations in the lives of a great many Saints; we must not lightly & rashly believe we are inspired by almighty God when we have the thoughts of doing the same things. We should run a great risk of deceiving ourselves, & take perhaps for a motion of the Holy Ghost, what is only an effect of imagination, or of a sanguine complexion, & give into some excess, which we shall have cause to repent of hereafter. Thus a young religious may easily deceive herself by making use of excessive austerities, which destroying her health, would render her incapable of serving the Community, & of fulfilling her essential duties; & oblige her to be dispensed with in almost every point of religious observance; or to take so much care of herself, that she at present does it with as great an excess, as she before wanted conduct in her indiscreet mortifications & penances. Let us be attentive to the excellent instruction, which the admirable Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST gives us (B. 3. c. 7. n. 2.) on this subject. "Some, says he, wanting discretion, have ruined themselves on

308 THE PERFECT

„ account of the grace of devotion , because
 „ they were for doing more than they could
 „ not weighing well the measure of their
 „ own weakness , but following rather the
 „ inclination of the heart , than the Judg-
 „ ment of reason. . . . Those who as yet are
 „ but Novices & unexperienced in the way
 „ of the Lord , adds he , if they will not
 „ govern themselves by the counsel of the
 „ discreet , will easily be deceived & over-
 „ thrown. And if they will rather follow their
 „ own Judgment , than believe others who
 „ have more experience , they will be in
 „ danger of coming off ill , if they continue
 „ to refuse to lay down their own conceits.

XCI.

Good inspirations are not likewise to be
 confounded with certain importune thoughts
 with which the scrupulous , the melancholy
 or those of a quick imagination are some-
 times tormented , in so much that they can
 scarce be a moment without some coming
 into their mind , to do this , to mortify them-
 selves in that , which renders virtue extre-
 mely tiresome & painful to them , & is
 enough to dishearten them , or give them
 an entire disgust for the service of God. You
 are , for example , in company with your
 Sisters ; you have a mind to say something
 in which there is no harm , & which you
 may absolutely let alone , but a thought
 which comes into your mind to mortify your-
 self , obliges you to hold your tongue ; and
 is very right so far. But , if after having fol-
 lowed this thought , another should offer it
 self , to be silent when you have a mind to

speak, & having also followed this second
 thought, a third should start up, & after the
 third a fourth, & after the fourth a fifth;
 the consequence would be, you could say
 nothing the rest of the time you have to be
 with your Sisters. More even than that, the
 first time afterwards you are with them, you
 will perhaps have the same thoughts, to say
 nothing; & the same thing will happen to
 you as often as you are at recreation with
 your Sisters, & so you will only go to re-
 creation to be silent & hold your tongue. But
 who does not perceive that these thoughts
 come rather from your own mind than from
 God? So it will happen that these thoughts
 will be a perpetual & extreme constraint
 upon you; & instead of going to recreation,
 to divert & ease the mind, you will only
 do with difficulty & by force; & will be even
 tempted to absent yourself, not to be obli-
 ged to use so much violence to yourself. The
 spirit of God is most certainly a spirit of
 discretion, & not of constraint: the inspira-
 tions that come from him, tend to correct
 our faults, or to make us practise true acts
 of virtue, & not to put our minds on the
 torture, by vexation, disgust & anxiety; he
 inspires us to moderate ourselves when we
 have too great an eagerness for any thing,
 to mortify self-love & other passions; but
 he does not molest our imagination without
 causing, in a manner more fit to give us a
 disgust for good, than to make us practise it.

XCII.

Self-love & the difficulty we have to mor-
 tify ourselves make us sometimes hasten to

310 THE PERFECT

satisfy our inclinations, least almighty God should inspire us with the contrary. At the very moment we perceive he begins to inspire us, we would rather, either he did not do it, or at least would prevent his inspiration in such a manner as not to have to reproach ourselves with having been refractory & unfaithful to his call. You have, for example, heard that a new Pensioner was come into the Monastery: & whilst your curiosity leads you to inform yourself of her name, of her age, of her air, of her condition, you feel that almighty God begins to inspire you to make a sacrifice of it to him: but what happens? The desire you have of satisfying yourself, makes you shut, as it were, your eyes to the first rays of this celestial light, & least by deferring to content yourself, you should not dare any more to resist the good inspiration & the cries of your conscience, you hasten to gratify your curiosity. O how much this shews an unmortified will, & little sincere as to God! True in fathoming this artifice of self-love, we plainly see how great is her blindness & how gross her wiles. Alas! Do you think to have less resisted the good inspiration in thus, may be said, going before it, than in not following it when you fully perceived it in your mind? If in this second case you think you failed in your fidelity, how can you reckon yourself innocent in the first?

XCIII.

This shews there are some persons that walk not upright with God, who conceal themselves his holy will to spare themselves

the pains of following it, & had rather
 abide in themselves what they interiorly feel
 Almighty God demands of them, than se-
 riously examine it, not being sincerely resol-
 ved to follow his divine will in all things.
 These persons practise good to a certain
 degree, but it is always poorly; because
 they endeavour to reconcile, as much as
 they can, the inclinations of nature with the
 laws of grace; or rather they follow grace
 till they are obliged to make some great sa-
 crifice, but soon abandon it when they must
 follow it in what is perfect. They may be
 compared to the Jews of whom Saint John,
 says, [c. 2. v. 23. 24.] *Many believed in JESUS-
 CHRIST seeing the miracles which he did; but
 JESUS-CHRIST did not trust himself to them,*
 because he knew what they had in their heart.
 And really, these persons are too great ene-
 mies to the narrow way of the Gospel; they
 are too unmortified, too much attached to
 themselves; therefore JESUS-CHRIST, does
 not trust himself to them, & never makes
 them partake of the sweetness of his spirit,
 nor of the unction of his divine communi-
 cations. Was you to ask them, how they
 performed their prayer, or their Commu-
 nion, & whether they were touched & pene-
 trated with devotion, they will complain to
 have felt nothing in themselves but dryness
 & distractions; to have had an extreme diffi-
 culty to recollect themselves, & to have
 reaped little or no benefit at all. And how
 can it be otherwise? Is it just, that God should
 grant to these souls so little sincere, so little
 mortified, this hidden manna, which he re-

serves for, & only grants to those who go to him with all simplicity & sincerity of heart & who are always ready to execute his divine will at all events.

XCIV.

„ Son „ says the Author of the Imitation [B. 3. c. 4. n. 1.] Personating JESUS-CHRIST speaking to the devout soul, “ walk before me in truth & always seek me in the simplicity of thy heart. „ To walk in the presence of God in truth & to seek him with simplicity, is nothing else than to propose ourselves to find almighty God & tend to him by the way of grace; without harkening to nature or self-love: it is to take for the rule of all our conduct the maxims of the Gospel, & to reject the illusion of the spirit of the world, of nature, & of the senses: it is to renounce to every thing that is not God, above all to ourselves; & to sacrifice all to find the precious stone spoken of in the Gospel, which is nothing else but the possession of God. If you will reconcile nature & grace if you flatter yourself, to be faithful to this & at the same time to follow the inclinations of that; you will not walk in truth nor seek God in the strait way of simplicity. Nature seeks nought but herself; Grace tends to God & seeks only God; Nature whilst it seems to seek God, diverts us from it, either entirely, or as much as she can, to induce us to indulge & satisfy her desires; Grace opposes her, rejects & repels her, & gets rid of her to go with greater liberty to God, & find him with greater surety. Nature will not yield to God on certain conditions & in

RELIGIOUS. 313

ed views, she fears to abandon herself
irely, lest she should either suffer or die.
Grace blindly abandons herself to the will of
God, whatsoever it may cost her; she sets
no restriction, nor uses any reserve; the
will of God is her rule, whatever God wills
of her, howsoever difficult it may appear,
she most faithfully embraces it. Nature says,
is enough if I serve God to such a degree
of virtue; the rest is too hard, one must not
too great a constraint on ones self; grace
has no limits, she does not measure with
God, she will follow him as long as she can
walk by the favour of his light, & accord-
ing to his will. Nature says, but if I do all
that God demands of me, what will become
of me? What pains will it not cost me? She
asks, why does God demand so much? Why
always mortify ones self, always sacrifice
ones self, always die to ones self? Grace has
neither *But's* nor *Why's*. It is enough God
demands something of her; she will know
nothing else but his divine will & how to
follow it. Thus in abandoning the oblique
& crooked ways of nature, & following the
straight paths of grace, we walk in the pre-
sence of God in truth, & seek him in sim-
plicity.

XCV.

„Son,, says our Lord again in the book
of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, [B. 3.
c. 14. n. 1.] “ Observe diligently the mo-
tions of nature & grace. . . . Nature is
crafty & draws away many, ensnares them
& deceives them, & always intends her-
self for her end; but grace walks with

314 • THE PERFECT

„ simplicity , declines all shew of evil , off
 „ no deceits , & does all things purely ,
 „ God , in whom also she rests as in her
 „ end . „ The rest of this Chapter is an e
 meration of the subtlety & cunning by-w
 of nature , & of the uprightness of gra
 We see therein that nature has always h
 self in view , tends only to herself , & p
 poses nothing but to please herself . When
 grace knows no wiles , no artifice , no shi
 no disguise ; sincerity , truth & simplicity
 company it ; & God is always the end
 proposes to herself , & in him she fixes
 repose . We see therein that nature loves
 liberty , her ease , her own interest ; that
 seeks splendor , honours , the advantages
 this world ; that she is entirely taken up w
 transitory things , places her happiness in
 life , & abhors whatever constrains , thwa
 mortifies or humbles her ; and that grace ,
 the contrary , flies what nature seeks , & se
 what nature abhors ; regularity , dependan
 mortification , disengagement from all c
 tures , poverty , suffering , humility . A R
 gious , who would for some time exam
 herself on the heads of this Chapter , wo
 perhaps find in herself many faults she
 not think herself guilty of , because nature
 them from her ; & would more over m
 there with rules of a solid piety , dictated
 the different motions of grace ; as well
 the strait way she ought to follow , to enti
 die to herself , & to raise herself to a b
 perfection . We do not here speak of any
 traordinary spirituality , nor of any fine
 culations ; the Author proposes , in this Ch

the practice of virtues, & of those virtues without which, had we all the fine sentiments in the world, did we speak of God like Angels, did we taste of his sweet comforts & consolations, were we absorbed in raptures & ecstasies of an extraordinary fervour, we should according to the expression of Saint Paul, [1. Cor. c. 13. v. 1.] *become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

XCVI.

Three things principally concur to make Religious interior. A hidden life, recollection & mortification. We will speak hereafter of the two first, at present we will stop at mortification. Hold it for a great & certain principle, that whosoever will be a friend of God, & loves this world, becometh an enemy of God (Jam. 4. v. 1.). That whosoever loveth & would preserve his life, that is to say, his carnal sensual life, the life of nature & passions, shall lose the true life by which we live in JESUS - CHRIST. That those who will not mortify their senses and their passions, shall never taste the sweets of JESUS-CHRIST.

XCVII.

Mortification is so necessary for an interior life, that we shall never succeed in this excellent state, unless we constantly exercise ourselves in it. It is a great pity to hear people speak of the highest spirituality, to have the mind to aim at it, & even pretend to find in themselves the dispositions of those, who are eminent in virtue; whilst they have not much as begun to mortify themselves in good earnest. They love their ease, their conveniencies; they will suffer nothing, they

follow the inclinations of nature, without ever using any violence to themselves; they nourish a thousand little affections that attach them to their health, to their friends, to their goods, to their own Judgment, to their own will, to all in a word that flatters them & at the same time, pride & value themselves on their spirituality, so far as sometimes to set up for great Mysticks. This is truly subverting all the doctrine of the Gospel & of the Fathers, is introducing a doctrine unheard of in the preceding ages, & is what precisely makes them fall into gross illusions, & keeps them in a false security in the midst of their

XCVIII.

Mortification is necessary for three things: to repair past sins, to disengage us from sensible objects, & above all from ourselves to conform ourselves to the example of JESUS - CHRIST, whose whole life was a continued series of suffering & mortification. If we will not suffer, we will not then have penance, nor consequently satisfy divine justice for our sins. If we will deprive ourselves of nothing, we will then remain attached to creatures & our passions; we will indulge ourselves in our affections, in our vices, in our defects, in our imperfections. In a word, how will JESUS - CHRIST know himself in us, when we love nothing but ease & conveniency, he whose whole life was so hard, so painful, so laborious?

XCIX.

A Religious, that desires to become interior, ought to mortify her mind & will, her senses & body; she ought to mortify

yourself entirely ; she ought to do it , not only in abstaining from sin , but also in depriving herself of the vain satisfactions which nature seeks ; of so many idle impertinent things , that serve to nourish & support her sensual life ; of so many frivolous attaches , which , like so many little threads , stop and hinder her from advancing in a spiritual life , & always keep her in a most imperfect state.

C.

Mortify your mind , in renouncing to all vain thoughts that flatter self-love , or nourish your passions. You was highly complimented at the grate , you was praised for your wit , & other good qualities , a thousand obliging things were said to you ; you have a great itching of feeding yourself in private with all these flatteries ; the thoughts croud upon you , & was you to listen to them , you would spend many hours with a great deal of pleasure ; this is what you ought to mortify yourself in. A supposition , either impossible , or that never will be realized , comes into your mind ; if I was Superior , if the King nominated me to an Abby ; if a considerable sum was left to our Monastery , if some rich present was made to our Sacristy ; you would willingly entertain yourself in these speculations , & would , with an extreme complacency , form a thousand projects on these chimerical ideas. You must renounce to all these things , & banish them from your thoughts. You have heard of a book lately published , that treats of a subject quite foreign to your state ; but it is perfectly well wrote , & you have a longing desire to read it ; you

318 THE PERFECT

must deprive yourself of it thro' mortification, & make a sacrifice of it to God.

CI.

We mortify our will in submitting to the laws of obedience, in renouncing to superfluous desires, in stifling the sentiments of vain joy, which self-love excites within us. You have a mind to do such a piece of work: your Superior will not give you leave to mortify your will in submitting it to her. You would willingly desire such an office & they do not think fit to give it to you, renounce to this desire. A letter is given you which you wished to receive, you are in great haste & very eager to read it; moderate this eagerness, & stay a while before you open it. Your Mother, your Sister, your friend asks for you in the Speak-house, you would run to them with all speed; do not go so fast, say a *Pater* & an *Ave* before you come down, that you may mortify your eagerness by this short delay. How many occasions are there of exercising the like act of mortification in our idle desires, in our too natural pleasures, in our own will? The detail of them would be infinite, because the heart of man is never tired of willing, of desiring, of delighting in an infinity of things, if mortification does not stop it. So a Religious, who has a mind to become interior, watches without intermission over her heart & over her affections, not to suffer any inordinate or useless ones; & the more she purifies herself of them, the more she is disengaged from the things of this world, & acquires a facility of raising herself up to

God & of reposing in him. Our vain desires are the ordinary source of our troubles; & one of the greatest obstacles to our perfection. Let us never propose to ourselves but one, & let us constantly stick to it, that of accomplishing the will of God. If we know how to fix ourselves to it, we shall not only avoid many sins, but also a great number of imperfections. We shall enjoy a great peace, & we shall practise all religious virtues; since the will of God is, that we should exercise ourselves in them, for his glory & our salvation. Who can disturb the happiness of a Religious, that desires nothing but to do what God wills, who aspires after nothing but to please God; who has nothing at heart but the good pleasure of God? Her happiness will only lessen in proportion as she deviates from this rule; & if a constant exercise of mortifying her vain desires, leaves no other desire in her, but that of accomplishing the will of God, she may say, I will rest & will sleep in the bosom of the God of peace.

CII.

You will mortify your senses, by bringing them under subjection to the laws of an exact discipline; the eyes by modesty; the tongue by silence, & the others by the virtues that mortify them. If you will see all, say all & hear all, what will your soul become? The will it not to be like a house whose doors are all open, & where every one, rogues as well as honest people, may enter in? It is then with a careful vigilance over our senses we keep our soul safe & secure, & it is mortified.

320 THE PERFECT

fication that preserves us in this wholesome vigilance. A detail of the acts of mortification of the senses is without end. As the union of the soul with the body is most strict as she depends on the senses in almost all her operations, as these draw her incessantly out of herself, to make her consider exterior objects; this dissipates her, this distracts her & draws her from the things of God, & makes her a slave to sensible ones, by which in a thousand ways she would be defiled, mortification does not hinder her from giving herself up to them. The more frequent the occasions are of acting by our senses, the greater need we have of mortifying them, if we have a mind to make any proficiency in true piety.

CIII.

How great is our necessity of being always upon our guard, being obliged to continually make use of the Ministry of our senses? How difficult to do it with moderation, with discretion, & according to the rules of virtue. How easy on the contrary is it not to abuse them, if we do not call mortification to our assistance? The senses are traitors, who endeavour by dissipation to draw our souls from God, in whom, as in a secure refuge, they kept themselves in safety by recollection & that to enslave them, and attach them to created objects, & often to reduce them to a hard captivity, from which they have the greatest difficulty to get free. Did we make use of our senses according to the order of God, there would be nothing to fear; but we make use of them only, for the greater

to content our passions; which so estranges us from an interior life, that instead of being all celestial, as we ought to be, by the purity of our affections, we become all terrestrial & all carnal. Our eyes are given us to raise our hearts up to God, by the view of his creatures, & to conduct us in the necessary occasions of life; & we make use of them to dissipate our thoughts on every object that occurs. The ears are to receive the sound of those things we ought to hear, & we open them without distinction to every thing that strikes them, good or bad. We ought to eat only to sustain the body, & how often do we do it to satisfy our appetite & luxury! What use do we make of our tongue, & of how many faults is it not the principal instrument in us, thro' the little care we take to refrain it! We must then, for it is a most certain truth, mortify our senses, if we have a mind to make any progress in a spiritual life; & every one who does not seriously apply herself to it, will only put so many obstacles to her advancement in piety, because the senses will always draw her to external objects, that dissipate the mind, & entangle the heart.

CIV.

The Author of the Imitation of Jesus-CHRIST puts the following words into the mouth of the devout soul. (B. 3. c. 26. n. 4.) Behold, eating, drinking, cloathing & other necessities appertaining to the support of the body, are burdensome to a fervent spirit. Grant that I may use such things with moderation, & not be entangled with

„ an inordinate affection to them. „ How far is a Religious, attached to the pleasure of the taste, from making a similar prayer; & how shameful is it for her to place her happiness in such base things, which were to the Saints a most painful trouble. Do, or can you know the spouse of a God, who has gall & vinegar given him to drink for our salvation, in a Religious that speaks, with an extraordinary affection, of dishes, of ragouts of seasonings, & of all that flatters the taste that shews a great longing after them, flies to them with greediness, & eats of them beyond the limits of temperance? Ah! how much more mortify'd were the Virgins of the primitive times, & all those who afterwards imitated their piety, they who lived so soberly that we might rather say of them, that fasting was their nourishment, & temperance their darling virtue. We may here remark that the sensuality of a Religious does not always carry her to eat those things, which are generally esteem'd dainties by those who live to eat; but very often inclines her to eat those things, which she has only a taste for, thro' fancy, & which do as much prejudice to her body as to her soul, which weaken her health, & make her contract dangerous infirmities.

CV.

You who so easily complain of what is given to you at table, who never find anything to your liking, who one while murmur at the dispenser, another time at the cook; I ask you, why came you to Religion? Was it to flatter your palate, or to live

mortified life? The soup was not good, the meat was ill done, that was too sweet & insipid; this too salt & too strong; you find fault with every thing, & was you even at the best of tables, you would perhaps shew some discontent. Are you a disciple of JESUS-CHRIST? No certainly. I will tell you, after Saint Bernard, that you are rather a disciple of Hippocrates & Galien. I do not pretend to oblige you to eat those things that may do you harm, especially if you are otherwise out of order. But take care that a too great attention to your health; that self-love, which alarms you at the least appearance of hurting it; that an excessive desire of your preservation, do not inspire you with this extreme delicacy, that makes you so easy to murmur & complain, so hard to be pleased, & so troublesome to the cook or dispensier.

CVI.

Mortification is a great assistance to a Religious, to make her practise charity & obedience. If she is not mortified, she will practise these two virtues very imperfectly. Has a Superior a mind to give a troublesome employ to a Religious who loves herself too much; what resistance will she not meet? Let her, on the contrary, address herself for the same employ to one more exercised in mortification, she will find her ready for every thing, she will not be forced to make use of entreaties, of any caution, of any by-ways, to make her understand what she would have her do. It is the same of charity: a mortified Religious is always ready to yield to others whatever is best; she does not

324 THE PERFECT

seek to accommodate herself at others' expences, every thing is always good, all goes well, all is well done, whenever it regards her. She looks upon herself as nothing, & takes scarce any notice of herself, & desires nothing but the advantage of others. Very different is this from an unmortified Sister that would not discompose, constrain or commodore herself in any thing; that looks & seeks herself, to whom all that regards others is quite indifferent & altogether unregardful; that would very little care if every thing went to decay in the Monastery, that she had what she wants; & that in she is so possessed with the love of herself, so prefers herself to all her Sisters, that she seems as if God ought only to make the sun shine for her, & that it is of very little consequence if the rest of the creation was buried in darkness.

CVII.

There are some Religious, who will always have what is best & most commodious in the Monastery; the best chamber, the best bed, the best place every where. There are Religious, who would not incommode themselves for one instant, nor in any thing whatever was it even to give way to a sick or infirm Sister. There are Religious, who look upon nothing as cross, but what is so to themselves; who talk of others crosses & afflictions as the most heavy, as of trifles, & who only exaggerate their own, tho' very small, perhaps only imaginary ones. Religious who never think what is done for them enough, tho' every body does her best to help & com-

ent them. O how unmortified a conduct is
is! Certainly persons so tender, so delicate,
who love & idolize themselves so much,
will have no reason, at the hour of their
death, to ask pardon of their dear bodies for
the bad treatment & hard usage they made
them undergo.

CVIII.

An unmortified Religious carries every
where with her, & shews her unmortified
spirit in all her actions. Does it come into
her mind to speak in the dormitory? She
will not constrain, to observe the rule that
ordains her to be silent. Has she a mind at
recreation to turn others into ridicule, or to
murmur? She will not refrain from it in
pursuit of charity. Is she is asked for in the
parlour? She will not stop one moment, to
moderate the eagerness she has to go thither.
Is she a little fatigued with the work she has
done? She will not deprive herself sitting for
ease, in a posture unbecoming the rigour
of religious modesty. Does she laugh? It's
with noise & clamour. Does any thing give
her trouble? She throws it aside with impa-
tience. Does she desire any thing? She seeks
it with an eager anxiety. Does she demand
any thing? She must be served immediately.
Is she incommoded on any occasion? She
openly shews her chagrin. She makes her
known every where, & with her her
unmortified temper.

CIX.

Firmly purpose, in the first place, to mor-
talize yourself in every thing, that might lead
you to offend almighty God mortally. Be in-

326 THE PERFECT

flexible in this, & chuse rather to lose your corporal life, than the life of grace. Is overcoming human respects, on a nice & critical occasion; suppressing anger by an extreme violence; rejecting, courageously & with difficulty, a most violent & flattering temptation in question? Do not hesitate, God ought to be preferred before all; & if we ought to sacrifice our lives for him, with much greater reason our passions. Purpose, in the second place, to mortify yourself in all venial faults use for this all possible violence against yourself. The loss of health, or of life even, is not so great an evil as a trivial lie; with how much greater reason ought you to constrain yourself, & not to spare any pains watching over yourself, & using violence to your inclinations in order to avoid it? Be mortified, in a word, so far as to correct your imperfections, to cut off all useless impurities, keep none of them wilfully, & listen not to the cries of nature, which feed and dreads such a constraint. Ah! Was you proceed thus far; how content would almighty God be with you, & how great reason would you have to be content yourself?

CX.

Let us not think it enough to avoid evil by the exercise of mortification, but let us also strive to do all the good God demands of us, by the practice of the same virtue. You are to ask pardon of a Sister, you have offended; mortify the pride that hinders you & follow humility & charity, that orders you to do it. You are to execute an order of your Superior that is painful & disagreeable to you

mortify your own will, & follow obedience that tells you to submit. You are to deprive yourself of a conversation you would willingly have with a friend, in time of silence; mortify your tongue that inclines you to it, & follow the rule that forbids you to speak at that time. Advance courageously in the practice of virtues, & mortify in yourself all sloth, pusillanimity, delicacy, sensuality, vanity; all vices, all passions, that stop & turn you from it. Pass over & trample on all these obstacles, generously overcome all hindrances, & look upon the violence, you are to do, as nothing. Mortification ought to conquer & overthrow every thing, to arrive at the highest virtues. Why do we see so many stop at the midway in the paths of perfection, only because they will not mortify themselves enough, nor sacrifice to God what stops them? How many would almighty God have raised to the sublimest state of a spiritual life; but who would not follow him as far as he call'd them, because they would not mortify themselves so much, as to make a sacrifice of all, for his sake? They would have willingly become perfect; but as they could not arrive at it without an entire mortification, & loving themselves too much, to sacrifice themselves in such a manner; they chose rather to live on in their meanness, & spare themselves the pains it would have cost them, to mortify themselves as they ought to have done. "Many,, says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 3. c. 31. n. 3.) are found to desire contemplation; but they care not to practise those things which

328 THE PERFECT

„ are required thereunto. Tis a great im-
 „ diment that we stand in signs & sensib-
 „ things, & have but little of perfect mo-
 „ tification. „

CXI.

It happens sometimes, that hearing or re-
 ding the lives of Saints, & the account
 the great graces God bestowed on them,
 think in ourselves, how happy they were
 be thus favoured by him; & are not astonish-
 they did so many penances, & embraced
 austere & laborious a life, since they we
 encouraged to it by such singular favours,
 recompensed for it abundantly, by such
 extraordinary comforts & consolations. This
 thought that easily occurs to the mind; but
 we are not to think God raised his Saints
 such sublime states & eminent graces, without
 their having been at the pains of mortifying
 themselves, & that even to a great degree.
 It is true we read that some Saints were pre-
 vented by these favours, almost from the
 very infancy; but the same spirit that raised
 them so high, lead them also to a very great
 mortification. Thus mortification was
 ways, as it were, an allotment or share
 the Saints, & of them those who were most
 favour'd with these marvelous gifts. They
 tended to them by mortification, they arrived
 ved at them by mortification, and maintained
 themselves in the possession of them by
 mortification. “ No Saint, „ says the Author
 the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, [B. 2. c.
 n. 7.] “ was ever so highly rapt & illumined,
 „ ted, as not to be tempted at first or at last
 „ For he is not worthy of the high contentment

plation of God, who has not, for God's sake, been exercised with some tribulation. For temptation going before, is usually a sign of ensuing consolation. „ Read what the same Author says in the 18 chapter of the first book; you will there see how much pains, labour, self-denial, mortification, penance it cost the Saints, to arrive at the eminent perfection we admire in them. But instead of being dishearten'd at this; we ought to consider, that if they, assisted by the grace of God, had the courage to make use of so much violence to themselves; we ought not to degenerate from their generosity, since according to the expression of Tobias (2. v. 18.) *We are the Children of Saints*, & the grace of God will never be wanting to us.

CXII.

A Religious ought to embrace, thro' a spirit of mortification, all the rigours & austerities of her rule: to get up at midnight, or very early in the morning; to be a long time at prayer, or at the office; to fast, to take discipline, to wear a rough habit, to have an uneasy bed, a poor room, & the other practices of penance, according as the rule she has embraced, is more or less rigid & austere. It is what she ought faithfully to apply herself to, as much as her health permits, in which she ought not to dispense with herself in the least, without a just reason & leave of the Superior. There are some rules so austere, that, without a particular attraction & call, which we leave to the examination of Directors, the Religious who have

330 THE PERFECT

embraced them, ought not to be permitted to add any particular penances. These rules tho' severe, were wisely & prudently established; & the austerities thereof are so distributed by the Saints who prescribed them, that a person of an ordinary state of health may easily support them, & live a great while; & we commonly see, in strict Monasteries, Religious of an advanced age, who with great fervour, live up to all the rigour of regular discipline, rising at midnight, fasting rigorously, laying on a hard bed, not missing in any point of observance, if they were in the flower & vigour of the age, keeping themselves so exact in all things, as to be an example, & to inspire the young with a holy emulation. And therefore it is an abuse to think that it is the austerities of the rules that ruin the health of the Religious; if it should so happen, as to one whose constitution is extremely weak; it is much more common that they keep themselves in good health, provided that, sticking to what their rule prescribes, they add nothing to it thro' an indiscreet zeal, or at least do not do it without the previous advice of a wise & prudent Director, who will have regard to their strength, & consider what God demands of them in such cases.

CXIII.

The rules less austere than those we spoke of, are not without their strictness, & the Religious, who have embraced them, apply themselves to be exact in them, they will equally be much mortified. For is it not in reality, a true exercise of mortification

have renounced all temporal advantages, & to all the conveniences we might have had in the world; to be shut up for ones whole life in a Monastery, without being able ever to go out; to go to bed early in summer, when we would willingly make up for the heat of the day, by enjoying the refreshing breezes of the evening; & to get up early in the winter, to spend a great while in choir at prayer, or singing the office, notwithstanding the rigour & severity of the season? Is it not also an austerity to do daily the same exercises without any variation; to get up & go to bed at the same hour, to dine & sup at the same hour, whilst naturally we are pleased with a variety & a change? Is it not an austerity to be obedient to the will of a Superior; to live in a continual dependence, to not have it in our power to do any thing, to receive any thing, to dispose of any thing, without her permission or her order? Add so many other regular practices; the detail whereof would be tedious. All this, tho' easy & comfortable to a fervent Religious, is not without being clogging & violent to nature. Thus a Religious, who is exact in observing the points of her rule, & in truly following the spirit of it, will find an ample matter of mortification. But should she think it hard; let her consider that she acquires a treasure of merit by it; & that the pain is short & transitory, whilst the recompence will last for an eternity.

CXIV.

A mortified Religious suffers, without complaining, whatever happens in the order of.

332 THE PERFECT

providence ; the incommodity of the seasons, a painful or humbling illness, any want annexed to her state. She does not entirely lose courage, nor is cast down, when an accident happens that would afflict another. She is not heard to complain every moment, in winter of the cold being too rigorous & sharp nor, in the summer, of the heat being too violent & intense. She does not listen to herself in small ills, nor fears great ones, so as to want submission to the will of God. If to poverty, she has made a vow of, puts it in her way to suffer any inconveniency ; she praises the Lord for giving her an occasion to practise her vows, at the expence of her ease, & to make him a more perfect sacrifice of it.

CXV.

We have remarked that we must mortify our passions & disordinate affections, that we must mortify ourselves in practising what is most painful & most hard to nature, in the exercise of virtues ; that we must mortify ourselves, in submitting to all the austerities of the rule we have embraced ; & to all the events of divine Providence, howsoever cross & thwarting to nature. We have said in short, that a Religious ought interiorly to mortify herself in the mind, & in the heart & exteriorly in the senses & in the body. Let us add there is an infinite number of occasions, in which we might perform acts either interior or exterior, of these mortifications ; and did we but husband them well, there is not a day but we might perform a great number of them.

We can not too much exhort the young Religious to accustom themselves betimes to these practices of mortification. They may at first set themselves a certain number of them, in which they ought to be exact; afterwards they may add a greater number, and insensibly a more considerable one, always observing nevertheless the rules of discretion & prudence; & in not doing too remarkable ones, without counsel, nor so severe & hard ones, as may prejudice their health. It must be observed here, in the first place, that they ought chiefly to set themselves those practices of mortification, that tend to make them more exact in the observance of the rule; or that serve most efficaciously to correct them of their defects, A Novice, for example, too lively & too giddy, has the defect of coming down stairs with precipitation; she may, to mortify herself, if nothing presses, & she is not seen, stop an instant at every step to curb her vivacity. Another is lazy in getting up in the morning; she ought to cast off her laziness, & to get up the very instant the sign is made; & glory to begin the day by this first act of mortification. A third has the fault of too easily staring about here & there; she ought to resolve to keep her eyes down, as often as she passes by a window, or by a door that is open, & where her natural levity would incite her to cast her curious looks. It is principally to acts of this kind, that the Novices ought to apply themselves, & of which, it is advisable, & will be very profitable, if they should

334 THE PERFECT

propose to themselves to do a certain number every day. It must farther be observed that they ought to exercise themselves constantly in these holy practices, to augment them rather than to diminish them. It is certain by persevering in them, they will contract a habit of them, so that it will cost them almost no pains to mortify themselves; they will be so accusom'd to it; & whatever number of acts is proposed or set them to perform, it will neither seem too great to them, nor too painful. On the contrary, if they are only exact in them by intervals, if they perform them to day & leave them off to-morrow, they will always find them equally difficult; perhaps they will take a disgust to them, & throw them aside for good; & by customing themselves to follow in all things their natural inclinations, if afterwards they have a mind to return & begin again to exercise of mortification, it will cost them more trouble, & be more difficult to them than when they first began.

CXVII.

As we have already observed; mortification is an exercise of penance, for the sin we have committed, & tends to disengage us from all creatures, & from ourselves, to unite us more easily & more closely to the mighty God. We must again observe. 1°. That the more difficult it is to practise, the more we ought to rejoice, because our penance becomes thereby more satisfactory. 2°. That we ought not to let slip any occasions of sin, but rather manage them; because the more frequent they are, the greater also will

merit. 3°. That we must not content ourselves to practise them exteriorly & highly, but must do it with an interior spirit of true devotion. We must moreover, as soon as we deprive ourselves of doing any thing which we had an inclination or eagerness, we must, I say, excite ourselves to some interior act of disengagement from that very thing, that the soul may purify it self from the affection she had or has to it. Our predominant fault, for example, is to be dissipated, [I speak to a Novice] & the Mistress told you to mortify your eyes ten times a day, because your dissipation proceeds from attaching yourself to whatever you see. What ought you then to do? In my opinion, as often as you cast your eyes down to mortify yourself, & not to look at what you desired to see, you ought to strive, at the same time, to make in your heart an act of indifference for what you would have been willing to have seen, & that you would say to yourself, No, I dont care to look at it, it concerns me very little to see it, or it does not merit my attention. What shall I see there, & what shall I be the better for seeing it? This interior practice is of a great consequence, than you may imagine; for in proportion that we are exact in it, the soul insensibly disengages herself from an affection to those things she deprives herself of, & acquires an affection for the contrary virtues. If we have truly patience with ourselves, when we begin to exercise ourselves in mortification, & if we tied ourselves down to practise it in the manner we have pro-

336 THE PERFECT

posed, we shall, in a short time, find ourselves free from an infinity of small attachments we had to sensible things ; we shall be quite indifferent to them ; & God, finding our heart empty, will replenish it with his divine unction.

CXVIII.

Let us say a word more to the Novices, to preserve them from a snare which self-love lays for them, in the practice of mortification. Your Mistress has order'd you to mortify your eyes ten times to day, & you would not fail doing it. But as it is too long a constraint for you to make this mortification last the whole day, you seek to get rid of it as soon as you can ; & you perform the ten acts all following, & on every trifling occasion. You go the wrong way to work ; & it is not the intention of your Mistress you should do so. She ordered you the ten acts of mortification of your eyes, that you might so distribute them in the day time, that where you would be willing to conquer your curiosity, contrary to the rules of modesty, there you should mortify yourself by casting your eyes down, that it might keep you modest the whole day ; & this is where you are precisely faulty in, & fail to do. You are content to constrain yourself an hour or two, making your ten acts in that time, that you may say you have done them ; & afterwards, for the rest of the day, you give to your eyes all the liberty they can desire. This licence you grant them destroys what you had acquired before, & never will you, in thus doing, acquire a habit of modesty.

The same is to be said of all other practices, if the Mistress told you to raise up your heart fifteen times a day to God, & that you perform them all in an hour or two, to be afterwards more at liberty to think on what you please; you will not correspond to her intention, nor ever acquire the habit of recollection, she had a mind you should contract by this practice. We here see how much nature flies all constraint, & that, when she can not have all her liberty, she struggles to have it at least in part.

CXIX.

The time of sickness does not dispense with you in the practice of mortification. I do not pretend you must get up in the morning, you must fast, you must work, you must do the same as others do that are well; whether your illness is great or little, long or short, you ought in a spirit of mortification, as well as in submission to the will of God, to suffer the pains, the tediousness, the loathsome medicines, all the contradictions of your sickness with patience, & without shewing any uneasiness or repugnance. You ought moreover to bear with resignation the pains & trouble your infirmity gives to others by the services they are obliged to render you; which to those, who have a generous heart, are often more painful than the infirmity it self. In a word, you ought not easily to complain, nor be always talking of your illness, like a person who loves & indulges herself too much; nor be difficult in taking the remedies prescribed, howsoever contrary to you they may seem.

to be ; But if you are truly mortified, you will content yourself to make known your infirmity such as you feel it ; & afterwards you will abandon yourself with docility to the charity of the Superior & Infirmarian , & will submit yourself with a perfect meekness & humble obedience to whatever they may order or would have of you.

CXX.

Always esteem more the crosses God sends you , than those you procure yourself. Apply yourself chiefly to mortify the mind & the heart , more than to macerate your body with instruments of penance. I do not in the least pretend to derogate from the necessity & usefulness of corporal penances. I know how holy they are , how praise-worthy , how beneficial , & often necessary ; but I would not have you make use of them thro' your own choice & inclination , & above all never against the will of those who have authority over you. It is more difficult , & we suffer sometimes greater pain in submitting these austerities to obedience , than we do in the practice of them ; & in these occasions not to mortify ourselves , is the true and greatest mortification. Obedience is never subject to illusion , but our self-will in corporal austerities is very much so , when we follow it at the expence of obedience. Then we become martyrs of self-love ; we hate ourselves the better to please ourselves & we humble ourselves , the better to flatter our pride ; we only follow our own humors & little vanity , far from following the commands of God & accomplishing his divine will. A

verily what good can we think of a Religious, who, against the prohibition of her Superior, keeps instruments of penance, in the use of which inhumanity appears more than prudence? What good can we think of her? Can it be said she seeks God & aims at pleasing him? Alas! I see nothing there but her indocility, her capricious humour, but whims full of self-love; & I cannot too often repeat to her: be on your guard against your own will, and submit yourself to obedience. Be discreet, seek God in the purity of your heart, & take care, that in being obstinate to follow your own lights in this, you do not torment yourself in vain.

CXXI.

If a Religious, who practises these corporal austerities against the will we have prescribed, will own what she feels in her heart, she can't deny, but that she has a scruple, that she fears almighty God does not approve of them; that her heart is dry & without action when she does them; & that she has greater remorse for having performed them, than she has confidence of having gained any merit by them in the sight of God. This is what happens, when in the best practices of piety we do not follow the rules of piety; I mean purity of intention & obedience. We do not seek God in them, but only ourselves. It is not then to be wondered, if we do not feel the unction of the spirit of God, & find nothing in them but aridity & bitterness.

CXXII.

On the contrary, a Religious, who performs corporal penances according to the rules we

340 THE PERFECT

have given, is most commendable, & we reap very great benefit from them. She must accompany the practice of them with prayer & humiliation before God, & with a sincere compunction. There are some, to whom these austerities are necessary to combat the different temptations they are attacked with & particularly that of pride; others stand in need of them to satisfy almighty God for their past sins & to excite themselves to contrition. To others they are useful to overcome sloth, to emerge from a state of stupidity, & from a sort of spiritual lethargy. There are in short some, whom an ardent love of God holily arms against themselves & to whom the most severe macerations are rather an ease, than a pain; the fervour of their charity carrying them to sacrifice themselves to the Lord & to endeavour to satisfy his justice, not only for their own sins, but also for those of others; not only for their own advancement in good, but likewise for the conversion of sinners, whose deplorable state, touches them beyond all expression of imagination. To hinder these souls from following their fervour, is making them suffer extremely; & the more they are permitted to use themselves roughly, the more their attraction & pious inclination is helped & assisted. In all these different cases, a Religious ought to open her dispositions & her desires to those who have the care of her conduct; & abide by what is permitted her without adding any thing, lest she should fall into the fault of doing her own will.

No doubt but a tepid lukewarm Religious, who loves to follow the inclinations of nature will be astonished at all we have said concerning the necessity & practice of mortification. Her self-love will make her find in it a great deal of indiscretion, & even an impossibility. She will not want false reasons & vain pretexts to dispense with herself in it. She will say: the detail we have given of the practices of mortification, is more fit to fright people than encourage them; that in following it, we must no more think of any thing, no more will any thing, have neither tongue, nor eyes, nor ears; that we must fly from every body, deprive ourselves of all discourse & of all comfort; she will say in short: such a life is insupportable, that no one can live in so great a constraint, & that it would be temerity to undertake it. Such is the language of a tepid Religious, & who has accustomed herself to follow in all things the inclinations of nature. O my God! how true is it to say; that self-love is blind, & at the same time blinds those that follow it. When we reason thus, we talk without experience & without Judgment, & do an injury to virtue. I agree with you that practicing the mortification we recommend, you will not talk so much as you used to do; you will not laugh at every turn; you will give yourself up to dissipation; I grant you must fight, now against luxury, now against gluttony; one while against vanity, another while against impatience; now against idleness, & then against an affection to

creatures: I grant you must be retired, re-collected & applyed to exercises of piety, nor meddle with what does not concern you; you must be laborious, & hard to yourself, & always ready to yield to others. But I dare assert, that in doing all these things you will be more happy, more content, more easy than in following the course of life you lead at present.

CXXIV.

The difference between an unmortified life, & a life of mortification is: that following the first, we find in reality in the beginning some pleasure, some satisfaction; but this satisfaction is never entire, this pleasure never fully contents the heart. Afterwards, disquiets, disgusts, bitterness, anxieties all crowd in, the trouble of our insatiable passions, remorse of conscience, & those interior reproaches, which always torment, & which we cannot rid ourselves of but grow growing deaf & hardened; which is most deplorable. Whereas, if mortification presents any thing shocking or frightful to nature at first, if her beginnings are hard & painful, because she always incites us to resist the bent we have for the pleasures of the senses, & obliges us to combat our too natural inclinations, we are soon recompensed for it by the interior consolations, by the sweet & inestimable taste of piety, by the ravishing peace of conscience, by the particular graces which almighty God heaps upon that soul, who sacrifices to him all the pleasures, satisfactions she might expect, & most willingly deprives herself of them for the love

of him. We may truly & properly here apply what the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST says (B. 1. c. 25. n. 10.) "When a man is come to this that he seeks his comfort from nothing created, then first he begins perfectly to relish God; then likewise will he be well content, however matters happen to him. Then will he neither rejoice for much, nor be sorrowful for little, but will commit himself wholly & confidently to God, who is to him all in all; & to whom nothing perishes or dies, but all things live to him, & serve him at a beck without delay. The same Author shews a little after, how different the state of an unmortified person is, as to the peace of the soul, from that of one who practises mortification. "If, says he [n. 11.] Thou beginnest to be lukewarm, then shalt thou begin to be ill at ease. But if thou give thy self to fervour, thou shalt find great peace, & the grace of God & love of virtue will make thee feel less labour. Let us here add that if a mortified Religious suffers trials, tribulations & temptations, she feels within herself a secret force which God gives her to bear this crucifying state, & a kind of peace in her soul in spite of all the pains she is agitated with, that makes her prefer her condition to all the vain joys of the world; & was the option made her whether to suffer as much again as she does, or to give herself up to all those vain pleasures, she would always give the preference to the pains, & would find them more sweet, than all the transitory amusements, they

344 THE PERFECT

possibly could offer to her. This perhaps will appear a paradox to a Religious imbued with the spirit of the world, & who is accustomed to follow the attraction of her senses; but they who are solidly grounded in piety, & who have made a progress in an interior life by the exercise of mortification, will easily acknowledge the truth of what I say, & that the crosses we bear for the love of God bring with them a secret unction preferable to all the world & the senses can offer of sweetness & of pleasure; which made the great Apostle, say (2. Cor. 7. v. 4.) *I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation.*

CXXV.

One may, you will say, be a very good Religious without practising all this detail of mortifications we have set down. She may apply herself to the observance of her rule & vows, she may live honourably in her Monastery; & in a word, render herself irreproachable in her conduct without using so much violence & continually bearing up against herself by such mortification. Let us set this in a better & truer light. If by a good Religious you understand one that lives without scandal in her Community, who has honour at heart, & values herself on her uprightness & who cannot be reproached with any formal transgressions of her vows, I grant that one may be a good Religious in this sense without much practising the mortification we proposed. But, I say, 1°. That such a Religious has a long way to go to become interior, 2°. That she will make no progress in

perfection. 3°. That she will fall in many things & will perform the greatest part of her actions after a manner purely natural; that is to say: one time thro' use, another, because it is the custom to do them; now out of a principle of honour & that they may not reproach her with failing in them. And if sometimes she does them for God, it will generally be with little fervour & a devotion more superficial than interior. I moreover say: this Religious will have very limited & narrow notions of solid piety & of the perfection of her state; that she will only know the one & the other in general & after a vague manner. That she will not have the spirit of the Gospel, which judges of the things of the world not according to the seducing appearance thereof, but according to verity & truth. That thus she will boast of her birth, talk with pleasure of the honours & opulence of her family, stand on every punctilio, disdain & scorn poverty, humiliation & abjection; be afraid of the cross & think those unhappy who bear it; she will look upon sickness & all that is contrary to self-love, as a subject of affliction; she will consider the enterprise of dying to ones self as temerarious & almost impossible, & will esteem death, as the greatest misfortune that can happen to any one.

CXXVI.

Let us go on with the character of this pretended good Religious, independently of the practice of mortification we recommend. She will have, or has, say you, no considerable defects; but where are her great vir-

346 THE PERFECT

tues ? She will observe the principal point of her rule ; but will she be faithful in all ? She will have the honour of her state & heart ; but will she have the true spirit of it ? I own she is not quarellsome ; but is she meek ? I grant she is not scornful ; but is she humble ? I also grant she lives in good harmony with her Superior ; but is she perfectly obedient ? She is a person of probity who has a fund of Religion , who would not give scandal , who loves good , & abhors great sins ; but with all this virtue , or rather the exemption from great defects , she is indulgent to herself , she loves her own ease she will not be contradicted ; she knows how to complain , she murmurs , she finds fault with this & that , she will not have them forget or neglect her in any thing ; she is pleased with being in office , & takes offence if she is passed by & has none given her. In a word , she is so weak , so unstable in goodness & so far from perfection , that was she to begin her noviceship again , she would stand in need of being instructed & taught once more

CXXVII.

Ask of this unmortified Religious , whom you call good , what fault she has thoroughly corrected , & what virtue she has acquired. At the age of sixty , for example , she is as quick in her repartees , as impatient as the first day she enter'd the Monastery. At sixty she has the same difficulty to submit & obey as when she took the veil. At sixty , she has less devotion , than when she was in the noviceship. At sixty she has the same inclinations , the same bent , the same defective

amour she had, when first they began to train her up in Religion. Which of two things, prove one; that either she never made any progress in correcting herself of her faults, or in the acquiring religious virtues; or that after having laboured at it for some time, she grew remiss & fell back instead of advancing. Ask her again how she performs the divine office, how she is affected at prayer, what are her dispositions in holy Communion. Does she sing or recite the office with the attention, the respect, the devotion, the holy alacrity of heart, which an interior soul experiences in singing the praises of almighty God? Alas! for the most part she only honours almighty God with her lips, & her heart is far from him. In prayer, her mind is often distracted, her reflections are transient & superficial, her affections cold, the time always seems long, her resolutions are general, weak & always fruitless. For these thirty years she has been in the Monastery, she has not perhaps performed her meditation thirty times as she ought. I will in a word piously believe she goes to Communion with the disposition essentially required, of having no mortal sin on her conscience; has she no affection to venial sin, & does she not so often fall as to give just reason to judge, she is but too much attached to it? Does she feel her heart penetrated with respect & love in approaching to the holy table? Does she come from it all fervent & recollected in herself? Does she shut herself up as she ought in her interior to unite herself, heart to heart with JESUS-CHRIST,

348 THE PERFECT

whom she had the happiness to receive, to reap in him the fruit of this Sacrament of life? Does she deserve, that this divine Sacrament should make her taste the sweetness of that hidden manna, which he reserves for those generous souls who triumph over the world & over themselves? That he should make her feel his tender consolations, honour her with his most intimate communications? In short, is she burning with holy desire of this celestial food, & does she place all her delight, all her consolation, all her eagerness in often partaking of it? O my God! how far is she from these dispositions! I dare say; they are unknown to her, & that this is a new language to her, which she understands nothing of; but which is very familiar to a Religious, whom the practice of mortification is become daily. Here then is that Religious, whose virtue & probity you would so much extol in a rank much inferior to that of a mortified Religious, who does not content herself with not being guilty of gross faults, with curbing the fury & transports of great passions, with living without scandal & without credit; but also labours to correct her lesser defects, to purge herself of all imperfections, to prevent as much as she can the rebellion of her passions, to disengage herself from all creatures, to mortify all her earthly affections, to fix her view on the objects of eternity, to render herself a model of perfection & holiness. O how great the difference between the one & the other! how far will your good Religious have to go

overtake the Religious that is interior & mortified, & how much is it not to be feared, that by not seriously practising mortification, she strays by her remissness from the narrow way, & enters on the broad one, which, in the language of JESUS-CHRIST, is the way of perdition.

CXXVIII.

You are dead, & your life is hid with CHRIST in God. (Coloss. 3. v. 3.) Happy that Religious, who studies this important lesson of the great Apostle, who penetrates thoroughly into the meaning of it, & strives to conform her conduct to it! This oracle ought to be writ in great letters over all the doors, in all the parlours, in all the cells of Monasteries. Every Religious ought to carry it engraved in her mind & heart, in indelible characters. She ought to repeat it often to herself, in order to be thoroughly penetrated with it, & to know herself always by it. This is the glass that ought to be presented to her, & in which it is always allowed her to contemplate & view herself. Let this be the first instruction given to Novices, let this be inculcated to them as much as possible; let them be given to understand, that a Religious life is a death, or living to all that is not God or for God; & a hidden state in the sight of God, in our word JESUS-CHRIST; every thing ought to inspire this death to a religious person: her separation from the world, her renouncing all the pretensions of it, her incapacity of possessing any earthly goods; the simple habit with which she is clothed; the veil that is

350 THE PERFECT

only designed to cover her face & hide her from the eyes of creatures. If in all the things she does not perceive she is dead according to the Apostle ; we may say , she has a mind , & does not think ; she has eyes & does not see.

CXXIX.

Study the practice of this important lesson if you have a mind to become truly interior. Look on yourself, for what concerns the world as the world looks upon those who are dead & only desire to be hid in God. Consider the state of those who are dead : they have no more commerce with those who are living on the earth ; they do not partake of their goods , of their pleasures , of their affairs , of their projects , of their interests nor of any thing that regards them. Should you ought you to be , as to the world , you ought not to participate no more of what passes in it ; you ought not only to be indifferent to it but also to try to forget it , & would to God you could entirely do it ! Moreover consider the dead subsist no more in time , but only live in eternity. In one sense you ought to strive to imitate them , in giving the least attention , possibly you can , to whatever is transitory , & wholly applying yourself to the contemplation of the objects of eternity. Would to God you could arrive at it , that you had nothing else to do than to pray , meditate , to entertain yourself with God & his Angels ! Would to God the cares of the body , eating , sleeping , the exterior obligations, to which you are obliged to attend, never interrupted your application to God ! But

cannot be dead in such a manner to these sub-
lunary things, you cannot be so separated
from them, but that you are obliged, & that
very often, to return to them; & therefore
never give yourself up to them thro' passion
or affection; but disengage your heart from
them, as much as lies in your power; that
whilst, on one side, you allow the necessary
time to them, you may, on the other, cut off
from them all that is superfluous, you may keep
your heart in an entire liberty to raise it self
to God, & may do it so often, that you may
be said never almost to cease from praying to
God, or from occupying yourself with him.

CXXX.

The Author of the Imitation of JESUS-
CHRIST has admirable sayings on a hidden
life. [B. 1. c. 20.] "The greatest Saints,
says he, avoided the company of men, as
much as they could, & chose to live to
God in secret. . . . Whosoever aims at ar-
riving at internal & spiritual things, must,
with JESUS, go aside from the croud. . . .
O how good a conscience would that
man preserve, who would never seek after
transitory joy, nor ever busy himself with
the world! O how great peace & tran-
quillity would he possess, who would cut
off all vain solicitude, & only think of the
things of God & his salvation, & place his
whole hope in God! . . . In silence & quiet,
the devout soul goes forward. . . . There
she may become so much the more fami-
liar with her Creator, by how much the
farther she lives from all worldly tumult.
For God, with his Holy Angels, will draw

352 THE PERFECT

„ nigh to him, who withdraws himself from
 „ his acquaintance & friends. 'Tis better
 „ lie hid, & take care of oneself, than
 „ neglecting oneself to do even miracle
 „ 'Tis commendable for a Religious man
 „ fly being seen, & not to desire to see men.
 By these excellent maxims, this admirable
 Master of a spiritual life invites & shews
 the practice of a hidden life; & a Religious
 cannot use better means to become interior

CXXXI.

Did we propose the hidden life, we speak
 of, to a person of the world; she might excuse
 herself from it, upon the obligations & con-
 decencies of her state, that oblige her to ap-
 pear & shew herself. Did we propose it to
 a Priest, he might alledge for a reasonable
 excuse the ministry which is confided to him
 & which obliges him to instruct the people
 to hear confessions, to go on the mission.
 But when we propose it to a Religious, what
 pretext can she bring that is not liable to
 exception? Has she a family to bring up
 lawsuits to sollicite, her fortune to make
 a publick office to administer? Has she a Parish
 to serve, sermons to preach, confessions to
 hear? She has only her soul to take care of
 & she will never apply herself to it more
 securely, nor succeed more efficaciously, than
 in a hidden life.

CXXXII.

I am a Hospital Nun, & consequently ad-
 dicted to the service of the poor; how can
 I reconcile a hidden life with the duties of
 my state? I am an Ursuline or an Augusti-
 nian, obliged by my state to instruct your

RELIGIOUS. 353

How can I lead a hidden life? I am Mistress of the Pensioners, which frequently obliges me to treat with the parents of the Ladies; I am Superior or Procuratrix; my office obliges me to often talk with strangers & seculars, I cannot undertake a hidden life, without missing in my duty. I answer, you can serve the poor, instruct the youth, converse with the parents of the Pensioners under your care, & with the others to whom your office obliges you to speak; you can, I say, do all these things, & live a hidden life at the same time; you will certainly do it, if you only acquit yourself of these exterior occupations thro' duty, & cut off from them all that is superfluous, & that tends to satisfy your senses & propensity for dissipation. It is of this as of silence. A Religious will have talked almost a whole day, & with all have kept silence. Another will have only spoke for a quarter of an hour, & will have broke; because this who spoke for a short time, did it idly & to no purpose, whereas the first, who talked all day, did it only, because the duty of her office obliged her to it. Hold for a great maxim in an interior life, that it is of the utmost importance to cut off all superfluities in whatever you do. There are three degrees in what we ought to correct. The first consists in keeping ourselves from grievous sin; the second in avoiding light sins; & the third in cutting off all superfluities & idle things; & this last is of great consequence to advance in perfection.

CXXXIII.

Let us suppose a Religious who has a great

354 THE PERFECT

many exterior occupations in the Monastery as a Procuratrix, an Infirmarian that has great many sick to attend, or in short a Lay Sister in the kitchen, who has a large Community to serve; this Religious may, I say in the midst of all her occupations, lead a hidden life, with JESUS-CHRIST in God; & in order to it, she has but to practise the following maxims. 1°. To propose nothing to herself but God in all she does. 2°. Often to raise her heart to God in the midst of her occupations, in order to keep herself in recollection. 3°. To regulate herself, & do all she has to do with order. 4°. To do all in silence & without talking any more than needs must because idle unnecessary discourses run away with a great deal of time. 5°. To act with diligence, but not with hastiness & eagerness. 6°. To do one thing after another, & not to undertake all together. 7°. To do nothing with noise & ostentation, but simply without affectation. 8°. Never to talk of her occupations, as if they were many & numerous, but to embrace them thro' obedience whatever they are. 9°. Not to complain of the pains, the fatigues, the hardships, the care she is obliged to have, but to bear the weight thereof with patience, meekness & resignation to the will of God. In a word never to give way to a pettish, peevish humour, let what will happen, but always keep herself in an interior peace, & to show in all an air of tranquillity, & a great evenness of mind. A Religious that would conduct herself by these maxims or rules, might do a great deal, without almost appearing

have labour'd much. Her work would sooner be perceived than herself; & altho' the whole Community would feel the effects of her beneficial cares, it would be always in such a manner, that she would remain as hidden in her conduct, as another would be who has great talents, & cannot be much employed.

CXXXIV.

The hidden life, we speak of, has many degrees. The first is to avoid, as much as possible, having any communication with people of the world. The second, not to lose our time in superfluous discourses, in the interior of the Monastery. The third, to love to be alone, to keep ourselves retired in our chambers, as much as obedience, charity, & our office, if we have one, do permit; without meddling with what others do, or with what does not concern us. The fourth, not to affect shewing the talents we have, with a design of getting into the different employs of the Monastery; which would be an effect of pride & ambition; but only to make use of them when occasion offers, as when we are put in an office, or obliged to supply the place of another; for it would be a great illusion, if to force the Superior or the Community not to put us in any office, we affected, under a pretext of leading a hidden life, to appear incapable of all, or to acquit ourselves ill of that which is given us. We have else where spoke amply enough of these four points, & will enlarge upon them no more. The fifth consists in not admitting any singularity in temporal things; but to follow the Community in all, as much as

356 THE PERFECT

health does permit ; contenting ourselves with what others have ; the same chamber the same furniture , the same cloaths , the same food ; without permitting any greater regard to be had for us , than for the others . The sixth degree is never to let any thing extraordinary , nor too remarkable appear in your spiritual conduct , sticking closely to the exact observance of your rule , & of the holy customs established for the support of regular discipline , & following the ordinary way of the Community ; so that it cannot be perceived you do more than the others who are equally punctual in a holy observance of their duties .

CXXXV.

We will here observe , that a hidden life does not always consist in flying from creatures ; since sometimes it happens that the more we strive to avoid them , the more we draw them to us , & make them seek us ; but it consists more in behaving ourselves , as to the exterior , in so simple & common a manner , that nothing may be seen in us particular that may distinguish us from others , & consequently render us remarkable , & attract the attention of creatures . Thus a Religious who is all the day obliged by her office , or by her different employs , to treat sometimes with the Superior , sometimes with the Procuratrix , sometimes with the Pensioners , & even with Seculars , may , as we have already taken notice , very well lead a hidden life in these occupations . She will be seen employing herself in every thing in the Monastery answering this or that , seldom or never al-

RELIGIOUS. 357

most in her cell, & nevertheless it may be said of her, she is seen no where, she is seldom to be perceived, & nothing is more remarkable in her than in the others; because she goes on without noise, without show; has a full command of herself in all she does, & moreover never affects to distinguish herself from others, as to her outward behaviour; but rather seeks to hide herself with her Sisters, as the least worthy to be taken notice of.

CXXXVI.

When we say that a Religious, who has a mind to live a hidden life, should, as to her exterior, conform to the conduct of others; it must not be thought that, should the Monastery be composed, for the greatest part, of irregular & dissipated Religious; she ought to imitate them, not to appear singular; this would be construing our meaning in a wrong sense, & grossly deceiving ourselves. Our intention is, that in this case, she should sooner follow those who are recollected & exact in the observance of their rule; & were these reduced to a very small number, she ought not to fear to appear singular in imitating them; it is her duty, on the contrary, to follow this most edifying singularity.

CXXXVII.

Another degree of a hidden life is to suffer, at the feet of God, all the crosses which Providence sends us. The Superior refused you permission you had asked; you was a little concern'd at it, & immediately you run & open your pain to a Sister, who, you enter yourself, will enter into your thoughts

& side with you. Would you not have done better to have humbly submitted your will to that of the Superior, & to have laid at the feet of JESUS-CHRIST, all the resentment that remained in your heart? You are subject from time to time to some little indispositions, which it is not necessary you should speak of, because they neither require the help of Physicans, nor the applying of remedies yet, as you are sensible & love to be flattered, you have no mind your suffering should be hid, you had rather be pitied; you tell to whoever will listen to you, that you have not slept all night, that you have a great headache, you are quite oppressed & no appetite. Alas! Did you bear these indispositions in silence; did you content yourself that God from whom they come, knows them; & that you suffer them for the love of him, without seeking any ease from creatures, how agreeable would it be to your divine Spouse! This would be a most meritorious practice of hidden life.

CXXXVIII.

You practise virtue, in the intention of pleasing almighty God; yet there is still some regard for the creature lurking within your breast, tho' you say in yourself, you will do for God alone. In sounding your disposition you will find yourself much concern'd, & you are convinced that no body thought you pious. A hidden life inspires us with intentions more pure & refined; it teaches us to seek none but God to be a witness of our actions, & of our best dispositions. You have patiently bore an humiliation, but rejoice

was perceived you did it out of a motive of virtue, that the esteem they have of you for it; might make you amends for the confusion you received. A hidden life consists in suffering humiliations purely & entirely without any view of recompence from creatures, admitting of none but what comes from the liberality of God. They would have put you in an office that was very pleasing & agreeable to you; you excused yourself from accepting of it out of modesty, but you did in such a manner, that no one could be ignorant you had the humility to refuse it. A hidden life induces us to shun all great employments, & moreover endeavours to conceal that she avoids them thro' modesty. We may here say, that a hidden life is an anti-dote against self-love, that it attacks & drives it out of it's strongest entrenchments.

CXXXIX.

When one is exact in the practice of virtues that appear, & negligent in those that do not; when one performs publick acts of mortification & humiliation, and omits particular ones that are not seen; when one shews a courage & resolution in great occasions, & is weak & irresolute in little ones; when one generously bears with an affront received in the presence of many, & is sensibly touched at a confusion in secret; when one flatters ones self to be able to carry the heaviest crosses, & has difficulty to submit to the lesser ones; when one talks of suffering martyrdom, & can't put up an offensive word; in all those cases, one shews to have made but little progress in a hidden life.

360 THE PERFECT

There is still, in the bottom, a secret complacency for what appears & is shewing, nor are we yet arrived at the degree of loving entirely to disappear from the eyes of creatures.

CXL.

Let us represent to ourselves a Religious little regarded in her Monastery, & who makes no shew, either because she conceals her talents, or has but middling ones. Let us add that she is subject to infirmities, of which they have no great compassion, & which make her be feared or rejected by her Sisters; that moreover she has great temptations to fight against, & very bitter & most grievous interior pains to suffer. Such a Religious, that bears these pains, these privations, these humiliations in silence, & who seeks none but God for a witness of what she suffers; is in the true state of a hidden life, with JESUS-CHRIST in God. O how this state, terrible to nature, is truly interior, how estimable, how truly precious in the order of grace! Few comprehend the price & happiness of it, & fewer still desire to partake of it. That is reserved for those souls that are initiated in the mysteries of a hidden life & of the cross of JESUS-CHRIST.

CXLI.

There is as yet a state more hidden. That of a person who suffers a great many pains, without their appearing; which induces others to believe they are only imaginary ones; & who moreover, having no comfort from creatures, finds herself most rigorously tried by almighty God, in a privation of consolation.

RELIGIOUS. 361

consolation & all sensible help, suffering in her mind clouds of darkness, & in her heart extreme aridity & dryness. This soul thus hidden to creatures, & as one may say, to herself, may truly say; she is hidden with JESUS-CHRIST in God.

CXLII.

We may then distinguish here two states of a hidden life; the one in regard to creatures, to whom one is unknown; the other in regard to ones self, so that the soul in the state of trial which almighty God sometimes visits her with, does not know her true dispositions; thinking herself extremely bad, when she is very holy; believing herself religious & horrible in the sight of God, whilst she is the most agreeable to him; considering herself as a far off, separated from, & rejected by God, whilst she possesses him the most; looking upon herself in short as abandoned by God, whilst she is the most strengthened & most particularly supported by him. This state is one of the most mortifying & crucifying ones of a hidden life; but by crucifying the soul, it disposes & prepares it for the most intimate communications of JESUS-CHRIST.

CXLIII.

We know but little of the practice of a hidden life, if we are too forward to speak of the particular graces we receive from God. The reciprocal confidences, which young Religious sometimes make to one another of their interior dispositions, shew a great deal of self-love, of puerility & of vanity. Be never too eager & desirous to

H h

362 THE PERFECT

know what passes in the interior of others should it even be under the pretence of being edified or encouraged. You will at first have a good intention, but soon after you will continue on thro' curiosity, & will lose a great deal of time. On the other side, if God favours you with any grace, either in prayer or holy Communion, keep it secret to yourself, & imitate the prudence of the blessed Virgin, of whom it is said in the Gospel (Luke 2.^d v. 19.) that she *kept all these words pondering them in her heart*. What benefit can you receive by divulging the gifts of God that is not counter-balanced by many inconveniencies? In the first place, it is not the Religious, to whom you make them known, that you are to ask advice how you are to conduct yourself to profit of those graces; it is rather of your Superior, or your Mistress, if you are a Novice, & more particularly of your Confessor or Director. Secondly, it often happens that these tendencies not being approved of, neither by the Superior nor Confessor, we are nevertheless tempted to continue them on; which proves we do not seek God in them, since we act against obedience, & are egg'd on to it by self-love & an itching we have to speak of ourselves. Thirdly, you may think to have received some extraordinary grace in your prayer, whilst you are mistaken & it proves to be nothing else but an effect of your imagination; & yet you discourse of it with your friend as of a particular favour, which will only confirm you more in your illusion, & furnish her the occasion of falling into the

same extraordinary notions, you have communicated to her. You will, in a word, have told, for a certain time, with a great deal of sincerity & simplicity whatever passed in your interior to your bosom-friend, in whom you had so great a confidence that you could keep nothing secret from her. But as all friendships grounded upon creatures, are liable to change, your confidence in time will slacken, grow cold, will break off & be at an end, & you will have the regret to have too much intrusted your secrets to her thro' fear of her divulging them. Would it not then have been better for you, to have kept the graces you receive from God, secret to yourself, & only to have studied how to profit by them? Silence is always the most sure; & the facility of talking of these things is commonly to be suspected of illusion.

CXLIV.

Keep then your secret to yourself. Let nothing but the necessity of instructing yourself oblige you to disclose it to your Superior, your Director or Confessor. If you divulge it to others, you run the hazard of God's not approving your confidences, & of his withdrawing those particular favours leaving your heart in a dryness, from which you will suffer a great deal to punish you for your facility of blabbing & talking too much.

CXLV.

I do not pretend, you will say to glory & boast of the graces which God does to others; I should think my self guilty

of pride, & consequently of a great sin. But we are two friends who think much after the same manner : We reciprocally animate ourselves in the service of God by communicating to one another what passes in our interior. We comfort ourselves together when we suffer any temptation, any trouble of mind, or are in any spiritual dryness ; if we are in a state of fervour, we encourage ourselves to be faithful, that we may preserve ourselves in it. Ah ! My God ! how much do I fear that self-love deceives you mutually comfort one another, say you when you are in pain ; Human consolation is consequently very suspicious ! Seek rather true & solid comfort at the feet of God, & there you will find it. If you are full of fervour you add, you talk of it to animate yourselves to it so much the more ; but take care again that the augmentation of fervour you may experience in your discourses, does not proceed from a disposition of your temper in which the spirit of grace has no share. At least, you risk it may be so ; whereas in being silent as to your interior, you have nothing to fear, & you have so much the greater certainty of acting prudently, as there is most commonly a great imprudence in doing the contrary.

CXLVI.

A proof that these confidences in the young Religious are oftner a childish amusement or illusion than a real good, is, that they take a pleasure in mutually revealing to one another their most secret dispositions ; that if it was it permitted, they would talk of them even

moment, & on all occasions, that they would never finish their discourses & would pass hours together in them without difficulty; whilst they have an extreme reluctance to speak thereof to their Superior, or to their Mistress, tho' the rule ordains it; & have an equal difficulty to give an account of them to their Confessor or Director, who are sometimes obliged to press very hard to determine them to do it down right & with simplicity. You, who are in the case, be here sensible of your illusion. Did the desire of your advancement make you speak of your interior, why are you silent, when your duty demands of you to speak; & why do you speak so easily, when you have no obligation to do it? It is easily answer'd; nothing is hard when self-love is the cause & spring of our actions; & every thing becomes difficult, when, to comply with our duty, we must contradict this self-love.

CXLVII.

When it is ordained by the rule, that the Religious should from time to time give an account of their interior to the Superior, or the Novices to their Mistress, they ought to do it with humility & simplicity; & in overcoming their repugnancy to it, if they have any, they will merit a great deal in the sight of God. The ancients ought here to set an example to the young, & not to stand upon their age, or their titles of Reverend Mother &c. &c, when there is no law or constitution that exempts them, the more titles they have had in Religion & the more they have distinguished themselves by their good qualities.

366 THE PERFECT

or services they have render'd to the Monastery, the more glorious will it be to them in the presence of God & of their Sisters, to submit to this rule with the same docility, & the same simplicity as is required, from a Novice, or from a young Professed. 'Tis to be extremely wise & prudent to have in this the candour & humility of a child. On the other hand, the Superiors & Mistresses ought to receive their Religious or Novices with so much cordiality, affability & charity, as to inspire them with courage in a manifestation so difficult sometimes to self-love. They ought to hear them affectionately, question them discreetly, entertain them cordially, instruct them charitably; they ought to speak to each one according to her capacity, character & virtue, & thereupon regulate their advice, insinuate perfection, by meekness, & not by severity; & in short, conduct themselves in such a manner, that their inferiors may have a greater desire to return to them, than to go from them. We will add that a Superior or a Mistress ought to be so discreet as to what her Religious or Novice confide to her, that no one may ever suspect she has divulged the least of her secrets. A fault in this cannot but be attended with bad consequences; & if a Superior or a Mistress know not how to hold their tongues in such a case, it may be said of the one & of the other, they know not how to govern.

CXLVIII.

When we condemn the confidences, which the young Religious make to one another of their interior, of illusion; we did not

pretend to hinder those which two Religious of a mature age might make to each other with the advice of their Director, especially, if they are conducted the same way & by the same spirit. We acknowledge, that these souls may reap a great deal of advantage by it; & it is in this sense the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST said (B. I. C. 10. n. 2.)

Devout conferences concerning spiritual things help very much to spiritual progress, especially where persons of the same mind & spirit are assembled together in God. We must only observe what we said elsewhere, which is, to take care this union does not appear too much exteriorly & does not diminish common charity. Let us add, that there are sometimes in Monasteries ancient Religious whose great piety, prudence & experience in the ways of God have gained them the esteem & confidence of the other Religious. It seems, as if God gave them to their Community for the spiritual consolation of all those who have recourse to their understanding & charity, so useful they are to them. We can but praise the confidence of the one & the talents of the others, & far from finding fault with it, we wish the same was to be met with in all Communities.

CXLIX.

Should a Religious be raised to an eminent gift of prayer, or be elevated to an extraordinary way; & it should appear against her will to the eyes of the Community, it would be more prudent in them, I think, to keep it secret than to publish it. First, they ought to make nothing, of what they per-

368 THE PERFECT

ceive, known to this Religious: because it would only give her a great deal of trouble & pain, or the devil would from thence take an occasion to molest & tempt her with vanity. Let her then be left to the care of her Director, & let them only examine her to edify themselves by her piety. Secondly it is still less expedient to talk of it abroad because that might draw a concourse of people to her, some to be edified, some to consult her & some to satisfy their curiosity. Had God a mind, that the favours he honours his servant with, should be divulged as it has sometimes happen'd, he knows how to do it without your interfering or meddling with it. Leave to him the external glory he designs should accrue to him on account of this pious soul, & let this Spouse of JESUS CHRIST, repose in the secret of her hidden life.

CL.

You feel yourself all inflamed with the love of God; I envy your happiness. But in the ardour that interiorly consumes you, you speak of God & of his love with so much eclat, with so much noise, that one might say; you had a mind all the echo's should resound & answer you again. I could wish you would lower your voice a good deal. Love much, & speak little; be like a Flambeau that consumes it self without noise before the Sanctuary. When a lighted wax tapers cracks & spits, it is a proof the wax of it is not without mixture.

CLI.

For the last instruction concerning the hid

In life we speak of, it may be observed, that
 the more a soul advances in piety & approa-
 ches to a union with God, the more she also
 finds herself inclined to separate herself from
 all creatures, to seek solitude & keep herself
 hidden. First, you will never see an interior
 person dilate herself in idle talk, & suffer
 herself to be led away by dissipation. Secondly,
 you will never see her seeking to make ac-
 quaintance, to procure visits, to gain friends;
 on the contrary, all creatures are trouble-
 some to her, she finds her greatest consol-
 ation in being alone; & when her duty obli-
 ges her to converse or treat of affairs with
 many people, she always does it rather with
 patience, than with joy; and finds no other
 satisfaction in it, than that of accomplishing
 the will of God. Thirdly, a person truly in-
 terior always keeps hidden the particular graces
 & comforts which she receives from God.
 She only talks & discourses of them with her
 Director, & that no more than is necessary
 to receive his advice, & to give him the
 knowledge he ought to have of the state of
 her soul. She is more inclined to accuse her-
 self of her sins, than to display these gra-
 ces; & we see that the great Saint Teresa
 being obliged by the obedience she owed her
 Confessors to write those, which God had
 favoured her with, declares at the beginning
 of her work, that she had rather been permit-
 ted to tell her faults & defects. Fourthly,
 every one may know by his own experience,
 that when he is truly recollected & partakes
 of the comforts of almighty God more inti-
 mately, either in prayer or holy Commu-

nion, he feels himself inclined to seek the least distracting place of the whole Church & to escape the sight of all the world, being desirous to see nothing, nor be seen by any one, that he may enjoy God with a greater satisfaction & in a full liberty of heart. One sometimes feels also on those occasions a great desire of hiding one's self, that being retired in an obscure corner, one would, as it were, thrust one self into the very wall to see nothing more, to hear nothing more but to delight in God, in an entire separation from all creatures. So likewise, when one comes from prayer or thanksgiving after Communion, in which she has been thoroughly recollected, she is inclined to speak little, she feels an aversion for all that is dissipating, goes with reluctance to exterior occupations, & is only pleased in her recollection & retirement. All this shews that an interior life is maintain'd & kept up in a hidden one; that interior persons love always to be hid; that the spirit of God inclines the soul he guides to a hidden life, & that those who love to talk much, who idly spend themselves & time in exterior things have not made any progress in solid piety & only practise it weakly & imperfectly.

CLII.

There have been Saints, you will answer who have not led this hidden life. Anchorites have left their deserts to treat of the affairs of God in Courts & Cities; Apostolical men have travell'd & run over vast Kingdoms to gain souls to God; Religious women even of an eminent sanctity, as Saint Teresa, Saint

Catherine of Sienna, have undertook frequent journeys either for the good of the Church in general, or for that of their Orders in particular. There are many others, to whom God having imparted the gifts of counsel & of preaching, have made use of them to help souls to sanctify themselves, either by freeing them from the pains they suffer, or in powerfully encouraging them to go on in the acquiring of perfection. How many others have not the most experienced Directors commanded, to write down their state of prayer, their interior dispositions, the extraordinary graces they were favoured with by God for the edification of the faithful? All this shews, that piety does not always hide it self. Such is your objection, here is the answer. We do not pretend always to shut up virtue in obscurity, nor blame those who exteriorly shew themselves by the order of God; but we say: that those who solidly practise virtue, generally love to hide themselves, & only leave their retreat, when they are obliged to it, either by a known inspiration of God, or thro' the obligation of their state, or by the authority of their superiors. It was only by some one of these three ways, that the Anchorets came out of their desarts, that Apostolical men have carried the Gospel into the most distant countries, that Saint Teresa undertook her foundations & Saint Catherine of Sienna her journeys. These examples will never authorize Religious to procure herself visits from seculars, to frequently appear without necessity in the Parlours, to distinguish herself in the

interior of the Monastery, to let herself
 for a Director of souls by her own appoint-
 ment. If there have been some whom God
 has blessed with the talent of speaking with
 unction of the divine Mysteries, & of being
 thereby useful to others; all ought not
 think themselves favoured with the same gift
 & if they were, they ought only to shew
 by the order of those who have an authority
 over them, such as their Superior, the
 Confessor or Director. Good may arise from
 writing our dispositions, & the graces we
 receive from God; it is nevertheless, from
 our Saperiors & Directors we are to receive
 the orders, & never ought to seek it
 ourselves. If these sort of writings composed
 by persons of great piety have sometimes
 turn'd out to the glory of God; there have
 been also others pen'd by women deceived
 by their own imaginations, that have done
 little honour to devotion by the false con-
 sequence ill-intention'd people have drawn from
 them. We must then conclude; that a Religious,
 who would truly become interior
 ought to lead a hidden life; that her piety
 will be always more secure in it; that she
 will make a greater progress in it, & that
 unless obedience or some other duty obliges
 her to shew herself, it will always be more
 sure for her to practise this excellent maxim
 of the Author of the Imitation of Jesus
 CHRIST. (B. 1. c. 2. n. 3.) " Love to
 be unknown & esteem'd as nothing. He
 who is secure, " adds the same Author (B. 3. c. 4.
 n. 5.) " it is for the keeping of heaven
 " grace to fly the sight of men; & not
 " to be seen of men."

seek those things that seem to cause admiration abroad; but with all diligence to follow that, which brings amendment of life & fervour! To how many hath it been hurtful to have their virtue known, & over hastily praised! How profitably indeed has grace been kept with silence in this frail life, which is all but a temptation & warfare. „

CLIII.

Silence is the faithful friend of a hidden life. We only make ourselves too much known, because we have a mind to talk; & we love to be silent, we should avoid showing ourselves so forward. You will never become interior, unless you bridle your tongue. There is not one Master of a spiritual life, that does not expressly recommend it. All the Saints look'd upon silence, as a powerful means to acquire the spirit of prayer & recollection; which is the chief effect, or principal occupation of an interior life. They recommended it to dispose us more easily to holy prayer, & how necessary prayer well perform'd is to arrive at Religious perfection, is well known. In this view, the Founders of Religious Orders have established the practice of silence in their Monasteries, as one of the most efficacious means to maintain regular discipline, to keep up recollection, & to make all virtues flourish. So that an exact observance of silence preserves the Religious Houses in the vigour of their institution; & a neglect & contempt of silence introduces & brings in relaxation.

374 THE PERFECT CLIV.

What a spirit of piety don't we remark in a religious house, where silence is faithfully observed; & what favourable consequence do we not draw from it? Can we figure to ourselves any thing so edifying as a Monastery, in which, wheresoever you go, no noise is to be heard; in which, the Religious whether they work together in a common workhouse, or whether they are retired to their cells, they apply themselves in silence to their occupations. Peace reigns in all safety in this Monastery; the same tranquillity is met here, as is found in the profoundest solitude. No Sister is an obstacle or hindrance to the recollection of another. The mind is not dissipated by vain discourses, the heart more easily & more frequently raises it to God. They go from their exterior occupations to the office or to meditation, without fearing being much troubled with distraction. The Monastery in general is in good order and each Religious in particular may, in peace & quiet, attend to the care of advancing virtue. But alas! What is a Monastery where the liberty & custom of breaking silence is become general? Wheresoever you go, some noise is heard, & true quiet never found. They speak in the refectory, they speak in the dormitory, they speak in the workhouse; they bawl & talk aloud, they are in an uproar, they sometimes wrangle, & sometimes dispute. Here they are bursting with laughing, there they stamp & gallop along with a terrible noise, & elsewhere they run down stairs with an indecent

precipitation. Some get together in corners, to murmur against their Superior : the ancient hold their assemblies to murmur against the young ; & the young have their meetings, where they talk without respect, & without moderation of their elders. Silence would hinder all these disorders ; and where these disorders reign , it is no more a house of peace, but a Babylon & a house of confusion.

CLV.

Accustom yourself then to speak little, if you have a mind to make a progress in an interior life, & enjoy peace & tranquillity, & the sweet fruits thereof. Often reflect, that you must render an account of every idle word, & that in talking more than is necessary, we always hazard the doing worse than to talk idly. " Why are we so willing," says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 1. c. 10. n. 1.) " to talk & discourse with one another, since we seldom return to silence, without prejudice to our conscience ? The reason why we are so willing to talk is, because by discoursing together, we seek comfort from one another, & would gladly ease the heart, wearied with various thoughts. And we very willingly talk & think of such things, as we most love & desire, or which we imagine contrary to us. But alas ! 'Tis often in vain & to no purpose ; for this outward consolation is no small hindrance of interior & divine comfort. "

CLVI.

Every Religious that talks much, dissipates

376 THE PERFECT

herself likewise much, or is greatly so already. The volubility of the tongue, & abundance of words, shew in her an imagination loaded with a number of vain thoughts; or she procures to herself new ones, that cast her a far off from recollection, as a storm throws a ship from the haven, when she is ready to enter in. A recollected Religious is known by the silence she keeps, & this silence to her a powerful means to keep herself in recollection. Figure to yourself a Religious who relishes the things of God, who walks in his presence, profits by prayer, & reaps great fruit from her communions; you will easily perceive, by her silence, she is in the holy dispositions; for the more her heart is full of God, in coming from prayer & to the holy Table, the greater inclination she will also have to keep silence. She would not willingly break it any more, & it will persuade her to speak. Consider & examine also a Religious, that is exact in silence; you will soon find her recollected, in proportion to her exactness: & her progress in prayer & in the virtues of her state, will be very perceptible.

CLVII.

Since silence is so necessary to an interior life, do not content yourself with keeping it in the times & places ordained by the rule; accustom yourself to speak little at other times & in other places of the Monastery. If you speak, do it always without raising your voice too high, & in a modest tone. Shun all exaggerations & superfluity of words. Do not engage yourself in any long conversations, with persons too talkative. Manage your

time profitably, in being sparing of your words. In short, let nothing but necessity, civility, charity, decency untie your tongue; besides avoiding many faults, you will draw down on yourself many graces, & find God more easily.

CLVIII.

We do not only break silence by speaking, but likewise by any other noise. You ought carefully to avoid making any, especially in those places & times, in which the rule commands silence. Should you walk with too great a precipitation in the dormitory; should you stamp too much with your feet; should you clap your door to, or in your cell, turn your chairs & table about, with so much noise, as to be heard in the dormitory or neighbouring cell; it would all be against silence; which is order'd as much for the tranquillity of your Sisters, as to hinder your sinning by the tongue. Let us here take notice, that it is a custom most piously established in regular Communities, to make use of signs, rather than of the voice, at the times appointed by the rule for silence, when one has a necessity of making ones self understood by another Sister, & cannot differ it till another time.

CLIX.

There are three sorts of silence; that of the tongue, that of the mind, & that of the heart. The first, without the two others, makes a Religious silent, but is not enough to make her interior. You are told to bridle your tongue, not only to avoid the faults you may commit by too much talking, but more to render the practice of holy recol-

378 THE PERFECT

lection easy to you. But if you employ in frivolous speculations, the time you cut off from your superfluous discourses; if retired in silence to your cell, you give a full liberty to your thoughts; you will then have only the shew of recollection, & will be in effect quite dissipated. It is not always a separation from the world that makes a Hermit; it is chiefly the solitude of the mind, by cutting off all vain thoughts; it is the solitude of the heart, by renouncing to all vain affections. A Religious shut up in her cell, & who at the same time leaves her mind to the world, & lets it ramble thro' all the streets of the town, is less solitary & silent, than a woman that sells fruit & herbs in the market & is interiorly taken up with her sale, in the intention of fulfilling the will of God, who placed her in that condition.

CLX.

The silence of the mind & of the heart which we recommend, ought not barely to consist in renouncing to vain thoughts, & disordinate affections; but also in emptying the mind of the thoughts of creatures, to be a means to fill it with good thoughts; & in purging the heart from it's terrene affections to unite it to God, by a thorough dedication. The passage of Saint Paul, which, in speaking of a hidden life, we cited; includes both these points: *you are dead*, says he; here the first, that is to say death, or a renouncing to created objects: & *your life*, adds he, *hidden in God with JESUS-CHRIST*: here the second; that is to say, to live in God by the remembrance we keep of him in our

mind, & by an entire consecration of our heart to his service & to his holy love. So, as we keep our tongue from creatures, to be the more recollected & the better to entertain ourselves with God; so in like manner, if I may so express my self, we impose silence on our minds & hearts, as to creatures, that we may the better apply ourselves to the remembrance of God, & turn all the motions & affections of our hearts to him.

CLXI.

The exercise of the presence of God is the principal & chief means to reduce to practice what we have said. If you have the happiness to contract a habit of it, your life will be as a continual prayer, & you will acquire Religious virtues in an eminent degree. The Saints, grounded on scripture & on their own experience, have recommended the exercise of the presence of God, as one of the principal practices of a spiritual life; & whoever would aspire at Religious perfection, & advance in the ways of an interior life, without making use of this excellent means, would be like a man, who designing to build a house to the south, should seek this south in the North.

CLXII.

Think not, that to keep yourself in the exercise of the presence of God, it is necessary to have your mind always taken up with the thoughts of God; this continual application of thought would be too much for any one to bear. The straining of the mind, instead of helping, prejudices piety, & commonly tends to nothing else, but to dry the

380 THE PERFECT

heart, to give a disgust for devotion & to impair the health of the body. For the same reason, we must not employ our imagination in considering, with too earnest an application of the mind, the sensible Images of the Mysteries of our Saviours Passion, or of any other object of piety. That is good for the time of prayer, & with moderation; but in the exercise of the presence of God, during the day; the heart must work more than the mind; & you will succeed perfectly well in it, when by short affections, by tender & amorous ejaculations, you frequently pour forth your heart in the presence of God.

CLXIII.

What is commodious in this practice is, that neither time nor place, nor exterior occupations, nor those we are with, are any hindrance to it. All that is required, is, as I may say, a cast of the intellectual eye & regard, an interior turn of the soul towards God, which is done in an instant & without any outward shew. You cast down your eyes for a moment, & in that moment you adore God within you: since, as our Lord JESUS CHRIST said, *the Kingdom of God is within you.* (Luke 17. v. 21.) Or you cast your eyes on some Image of our Saviour, accompanied with the sentiments of the heart, which, inflamed with the ardour of charity, shoots itself, as a dart, towards him by the most amorous affections.

CLXIV.

Change your sentiments, in these elevations of your heart to God, according to the different dispositions or necessities of your soul

RELIGIOUS. 381

You may make use of them in time of temptations, to beg of almighty God grace to resist them. You may use them in sadness, dejection & driness, either to be freed from them, or to obtain grace to bear this state of privation, with submission & with fruit. You may use them, in your fervour, to excite within you more ardent affections towards God. Sometimes you may petition to amend yourself of such & such a fault; sometimes to practise such & such a virtue; sometimes to detest your past sins; sometimes we sigh after the end of our spiritual miseries, or to be freed from the dangers of this life; or to enjoy the unchangeable happiness of the Saints in eternity. O how happy is a Religious, when by a long practice grown strong in virtue, & wounded with the dart of divine love, she incessantly sighs after the moment to be forever united to JESUS-CHRIST in heaven, & expresses her ardent desires, by almost continual ejaculations of her heart towards him! You may meet, in the third book of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, most noble & elevated sentiments, that may serve as a model for this practice; but particularly in the 48th. chapter, which is nothing but a continued collection of affectionate emotions, inspired by the view of the miseries of this life, of the felicity of the Saints, of the happiness of possessing God in heaven, without disturbance & without fear of losing him. You can't read this chapter too often, to excite in yourself sentiments of an entire disengagement from this life, & of a pure love of God. The Author expresses, in a noble

382 THE PERFECT

& pathetick manner, the breathings of a soul languishing with love, & deeply wounded with the dart of perfect charity, that only bears & supports the exile of this life, thro' patience & submission to the will of God.

CLXV.

You, who begin to exercise yourself in this holy practice of raising your heart, by frequent ejaculations to God; be not disheartened, if at first, you should find it dry & troublesome, & even should you sometimes forget it. Strive to be faithful in it, & to contract a habit of it. Endeavour to remember it, & for that frame to yourself, with a pious industry, a local memory. Propose to yourself, for example, to make an act of the love of God, or of some other virtue as often as you pass before such a Chapel, or as often as you go out of your chamber, or begin any work, or change your actions. Was you thoroughly penetrated with a desire of acquiring this holy habit; you would be industrious in finding out the means for it, a good will always finds new & successful ones,

CLXVI.

Never go into your cell, without kneeling down & saying a short prayer at your oratory; & never likewise go out of it, without asking the blessing of our Lord, thro' the intercession of the most holy Virgin; that he may preserve you from being dissipated or doing any thing that may displease him. This is to be understood, when you go into your chamber to stay sometime, & not when you come out of it the same instant almost you

went in. Moreover, when you are working there alone, should the clock strike any hour, you would do very well to lay aside your work, if conveniently you can, & to kneel down at your oratory, & recite the *Hail Mary*, or any other prayer according to your devotion.

CLXVII.

In the interior part of Monasteries there are, generally speaking, several Chapels, which the particular Religious take care of, each according to her devotion. All this is very proper to nourish piety, provided their ornaments & decorations are not so rich, as to be incompatible with the perfection of religious poverty. These Chapels are erected partly, that in going thro' the Convent & garden, you might often meet proper objects to recollect yourself. Would it not be an excellent practice, if in passing, for example, before the Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, you was to beg of him to inflame your heart with his holy love; or if passing before that of the blessed Virgin, or of any other Saint, you was to implore her assistance & protection.

CLXVIII.

Scarce will you have apply'd yourself any time, thus often to raise up your heart to God, but you will begin to taste the salutary fruits of this angelical exercise. You will experience a greater facility to recollect yourself, to be attentive to prayer, & to perform your meditation as you ought. You will not be so easily dissipated, you will be more modest, & more cautious in your words, & in

all your behaviour. You will avoid a great number of faults that are committed thro' dissipation, & you will feel the fervour of devotion augment in your soul with so much unction & suavity, that you will be surprisngly animated & comforted by it. The same exercise will strengthen & support you in time of temptation, & in difficult occasions. For example, you are excited to sentiments of indignation & impatience by a cross word, or the uncivil behaviour of a Sister; the custom of raising your heart to God will then come into your assistance, will appease those emotions, & obtain you some particular grace, to enable you to suffer with patience & humility, what otherwise would have touch'd you to the quick, & been most sensible to you.

CLXIX.

Frequent raising of the heart to God disposes a Religious for the spirit of recollection, which consists in disengaging ourselves from all sensible objects, & in occupying our thoughts with God. Ah how necessary is this spirit of recollection to acquire religious perfection! Of what consequence is not the acquisition of it? How powerful are its effects, & its fruits how sweet, how plentiful, how comforting? Who can express the peace, the interior unction, the lights, the ardour, & all the particular graces a faithful soul receives, thro' the means of a holy recollection? And what an example of virtue & holiness is not a Religious to her Monastery, who has obtained it of almighty God? Where ever you meet her, you will always see in her wherewith to be edify'd, when

w it

with to be spur'd on to the practice of virtue. If in the choir, her eyes modestly cast down, her humble & respectful countenance make you feel what you there owe to God. If in any other place of the Monastery, her grave air & charming modesty incite you to be reserved, & makes you blush at & ashamed of your dissipation. And truly one must be extremely giddy, not to put on a serious & grave countenance, when one sees a Religious perfectly recollected. May God deeply imprint, in your heart, the desire of thus glorifying him in your Monastery ! It is one of the greatest blessings you can wish, both for your own soul, & the edification of your Sisters.

CLXX.

If you have a mind to partake of the advantages of this recollection ; do not imitate those inconstant souls, who begin it to day, & leave it off to morrow ; who are immediately tired to remain shut up in their own interior ; who easily, & on the least occasion, follow their natural levity, & who find it so difficult to think of God, that they grow weary of it, as soon almost as they begin : you must persevere, to reap the fruits of holy recollection ; & should you interrupt it, by frequent dissipations ; you would lose more of your recollection, in dissipating yourself one day ; than you would acquire of it, by three weeks application : moreover an affection to certain things we do, a natural joy we abandon ourselves to, a sadness in which we indulge ourselves, a project we have framed, which is always uppermost in our thoughts ; all this banishes the spirit of recollection

386 THE PERFECT

from us. To acquire this spirit, we must disengage ourselves from the things of the world as recollection likewise greatly contribute to the acquiring a perfect disengagement

CLXXI.

O how great graces you would obtain, the means of recollection; did you know withdraw your affections from all sensible objects! How bright would your concepts be? How enlightend your understanding? How sublime your thoughts? How intimate your communications with God? How sweet & comfortable your peace? How solid your joy, & how perfect your content? you would see a new heaven & new earth, it is said in the Apocalypse, [c. 21. v.] that is; you would be much more enlightened on the mysteries of God, & on the nothingness of creatures; you would taste more solidly & more sensibly the truths of the Gospel, & would comprehend more clearly the vanity of all things, that fly away with time, & the folly of those, who are tied & attached to them.

CLXXII.

Should it be asked, why there are so few persons truly interior; the answer is; because there are but few, who sincerely renounce to exterior objects, & who turn their affections to spiritual things. We do not mean or pretend, that we must no more be employed in exterior actions, & be solely entirely taken up in prayer & contemplation. But the affection of the heart is here in question; the business is; to purge it thoroughly of all attachment to created things.

not to seek them out of any fondness or
 passion, but meerly out of duty & a princi-
 ple of Religion. The want of this simplicity
 & purity of intention is what keeps those
 persons in the lowest rank of a spiritual life;
 it hinders them rising higher, shuts the
 door of perfect recollection against them,
 & deprives them of the treasures, of the bles-
 sings & consolations they might enrich them-
 selves with. "Unless a man," says the Author
 of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, [B. 3. c.
 n. 1.] "be at liberty from all things
 created, he cannot freely attend to things
 divine. And this is the reason why there
 are found so few contemplative persons,
 because there are few that wholly seques-
 ter themselves from transitory and created
 things.

CLXXIII.

To walk with God within, says again the
 same Author excellently well, (B. 2. c. 6. n. 4.)
 & not to be held by any affection without,
 is the state of an internal man. We can-
 not better express, in so few words, the dis-
 positions that render a person truly interior.
 It here consists in two points, but most
 essential; disengagement, & recollection.
 The same Author almost every where insists
 on these two heads; he lays them down as
 the two foundation stones of a spiritual life;
 whatever practices of perfection are not built
 on them, will have nothing but a beauti-
 ful outside, & within will have nothing
 solid, nothing durable, nothing but what
 will fail on the first occasion.

388 THE PERFECT CLXXIV.

The reason why we make but little progress, in the work of our perfection ; & why we always remain at a distance from the perfect state of an interior life , is ; because we do not fully & entirely dedicate ourselves to spiritual things ; because we reserve something to ourselves , because we will retain something of the spirit of the world or of self-love ; because ; in short , we will not make a sacrifice of our whole selves to almighty God. But let us remember this great lesson , which the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST sets down , (B. 3. c. 33. n. 1.) as given by this divine Master to the devout soul : *Forsake all , & thou shalt find all.* O words full of the wisdom of God ! O words worthy of the mouth of this divine Master ! They contain the whole Gospel ; they comprehend all the œconomy of a spiritual life ; they teach us all perfection. We must then resolve to forsake all , & chiefly to forsake ourselves ; we must , as Saint John of the Cross , that eminent Doctor of mystical divinity so much recommends ; we must empty ourselves of all affection to whatever is not God ; so that , in some measure , we reduce ourselves to nothing in his regard & then we shall find all , because God is all & we ought not to seek our all , but in him alone. O how much again do not these words of the same Author deserve our most serious reflections , & how proper are they to induce us to a perfect disengagement when he says : (B. 3. c. 31. n. 2.) *Whatsoever is not God is nothing , & ought to be accounted*

as *nothing*. Let us ground ourselves well in this essential truth; let our mind be entirely penetrated with it, let us square all our thoughts, our sentiments, our affections by it, & let our heart, being full of it, overflow & influence all our conduct; so that it may appear to God, to his Angels, even to those we live with, that we account as nothing all that is not God, or for God. But as long as we do not conduct & guide ourselves by this principle, as long as we look upon any thing that is not God, or for God, as worthy of our affection; we shall not have a perfect disengagement, we shall not forsake all, & consequently we shall not find all; because this great all, this only all is to be found no where but in God, it is only there to be communicated to us in its plenitude & totality, as I may say, in as much as we forsake all, to obtain it.

CLXXV.

These are, you will say, all fine maxims. For this perfect disengagement, this stripping ourselves, this emptying ourselves, this nothing, to which we must reduce ourselves, how hard & difficult is it? Who dares flatter himself ever to arrive at it in this life, where we are always tied to something, or at least to ourselves, where never being able to separate ourselves from ourselves, we live so much to ourselves, we are so possessed & taken up with ourselves, we so artfully & cunningly seek ourselves, in so many things; almost every where find ourselves? What possibility? We here truly ask nothing impossible; nor propose any perfection, but

what may be acquired, by the ordinary means of grace; & if this perfect disengagement can frighten or allarm any one; it can only be a Religious, who has certain ties & affections, which she will entertain to the prejudice of her perfection, or whose slothfulness or self-love hinder her from undertaking any thing, to succeed efficaciously in her thorough change & reformation. But to answer in a manner, that may prove satisfactory; let us lay down some principles, which can't be controverted. The first is: a Religious, by virtue of her state, ought, indispensably, to tend to perfection. The second: that perfection consists in a perfect union of our souls with God, by the bonds of charity. The third is: that to arrive at this perfection, three things are necessary, to wit, an avoiding all mortal sin & even venial, as much as human frailty does permit; the practice of virtues, & a perfect union with God. The fourth is: that this perfect union with God does not consist in ecstasies, in raptures & other supernatural communications, that happen in the extraordinary way of grace, which are favours as gratuitous & free given, as that of prophecy, & independently of which we may be holy & Saints; but that it chiefly consists in a perfect conformity of our wills to the will of God. The fifth is: that the more we avoid venial sins, even light ones; the more we moderate our passions, by the practice of virtue; the more we are united to God; the more perfect also we shall be. The sixth is: that to whatever degree of perfection we are arrived to, in this life; we may

always become more perfect, & there is no
 absolute perfection in this world, beyond
 which there is no farther perfection to be
 acquired; but only a relative one, that is, in
 comparison to the inferior degrees of per-
 fection of the lesser advanced. The seventh
 is: that in consequence of what we have said,
 perfection includes also Christian Justice,
 which consists in shunning evil & doing
 good; & consequently, to arrive at perfec-
 tion, we must purify ourselves without cea-
 sing from all evil, & even from the very
 least, as much as human weakness permits.
 The eighth is: that as there is only the B.
 Virgin Mary, to whom God granted the pri-
 vilege of not committing any sin, even
 venial; & that all the other Saints, without
 even excepting the Apostles, who were con-
 firmed in grace, were not exempt from ve-
 nial faults; it follows, that as long as we are
 in this life, we shall fall into some faults, at
 least small ones, & shall always stand in need
 of purifying ourselves; it follows likewise,
 that we shall always have a necessity of being
 on our guard against our passions, which are
 even sometimes felt by the most perfect;
 there being no state exempt from them, as
 certain heathen Philosophers, & after them,
 the Monks of Egypt falsely & erroneously taught,
 of a mistaken spirituality. These princi-
 ples once supposed as so many incontest-
 ed truths; let us at present calm your fears: you
 who are shock'd & frighted at the perfect
 engagement, we exhort you to aspire &
 to it; what is it we here demand of you?
 It is that you should have no more tempta-

tions to fight against, no more vain desires to mortify, no more sins, even small ones, to expiate? No without doubt, we have already told you this was the great privilege granted to none, but to the blessed Virgin.

To whatever degree of perfection you are arrived, you must expect to be tempted, to feel your passions rebel, to be drawn, thro' frailty, into some faults; but hence we conclude & exhort you to continually labour & strive to disengage yourself from all; that is to resist temptations, & moreover to be on your guard, & above all to keep a watch over your senses, to hinder them sliding into your soul; to curb your passions, & moreover to watch and prevent them, lest they should prevent you; to avoid voluntary venial faults, & besides to endeavour, as much as our weakness does allow, not to fall into them thro' negligence, or want of vigilance. The more therefore you advance in these things, the more also will you approach to this 'perfect disengagement we talk of. But whereas, as we have already said, there is no consummate perfection in this life; so God will not expect till you have acquired it, to make you find that all in him, we gave you the hopes of finding there. He will grant it you in proportion to your exactness in purging yourself more & more from all affection to created things; & you will find in him a tender father, a Spouse infinitely lovely, a faithful friend, a powerful protector; immense riches, ineffable consolations, superior strength, a recompence for all your pains, a heavenly peace,

the pleasing hopes of goods without measure, that he promises you in eternity. This is that will repay with interest, even in this life, what you have forsaken for him; so that in forsaking all, you will truly find all in him: & besides this, all you leave will be nothing, in comparison to what will be given you. "If thou wilt be delighted in truth, & receive more abundant consolations from me,," says JESUS-CHRIST to the devout soul, in the book of the Imitation, (B. 3. c. 1. n. 5.) "behold it is in the contempt of all worldly things; & the renouncing all these mean pleasures, shall be thy blessing, & an exceeding great comfort to thy soul; & the more thou withdrawest thyself from all comfort, from things created; the more sweet & more powerful consolation shalt thou find in me."

CLXXVI.

There are some who complain of having no consolation in their exercises of piety, no fervour in their prayer, no delight & sweetness in meditation, no fervour in holy Communion. They complain that almighty God does not communicate himself to the interior of their heart, by that sweet unction, so much spoke of in an interior life, & which the Holy Ghost promises, in the scripture, to those souls who are faithful. But how unjust is this complaint? They will taste the advantages of a spiritual life, & do not set about doing what is necessary to deserve it. That is, they offer to God a heart divided; & they expect that God should give himself whole to them; they will not renounce to the con-

394 THE PERFECT

solations of the world, & they will enjoy those of heaven. They will be treated as generous souls, & they will sacrifice nothing to God, nor use any violence to themselves, in order to please him. Render Justice to God, to the faithful souls, & to yourself. God owes nothing to us, & without being willing to do any thing for him, we require he should communicate himself to us, as if he was indebted to us for all. The faithful souls are exact in accomplishing the will of God, in every thing; & we will, with them, partake of the favours God honours them with, whilst we are constantly unfaithful to him. In a word, we continually resist almighty God, we do almost nothing for him, & what we do for him, we do very ill; & we expect he should recompense us. You, who make these unjust complaints, tell me of what, & of whom you do complain? You do not experience the sweets of an interior life, what do you do to deserve it? God does not grant you those favours, with which he honours those that are interior; how do you serve him to move him to it? I appeal to the tribunal of your own conscience; she will soon tell you, that it is of yourself alone you ought to complain, & that it is you alone who hinders it. Be faithful, & God will be liberal; be exact, & God will bless you; change your conduct, & God will change his in your regard.

CLXXVII.

Let us return to that recollection we ceased to speak of. When a Religious is truly interior, she never lets herself be entirely

taken up with exterior things, & also finds, in whatever outwardly presents it self to her, motives to raise herself to God; very different in this from a Religious, that it not recollected, who abandons herself so much to her external occupations, as to be wholly run away by, & taken up with them; who far from finding motives of raising herself to God, in the creatures that are about her; only makes use of them to forget him. "He, who knows how to walk internally, says excellently well the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 2. c. 1. n. 7.) " & to make little account of external things, is not at a loss for proper places or times, for performing devout exercises. An internal man quickly recollects himself, because he never pours forth his whole self upon outward things. Exterior labour is no prejudice to him, nor any employment, which for a time is necessary; but as things fall out, so he accommodates himself to them. Hence we see, that what turns to the advantage, & forwards the progress of an interior & recollected Religious; only serves to distract her more, who is already dissipated, & to make her commit a great number of infidelities & immortifications. Should a flower, for example, be offered to an interior Religious; she will admire in it's structure, in the vivacity & variety of it's colours, the omnipotent hand that made it with so much art, & will excite herself to glorify the Sovereign Creator of all things, whose power & wisdom so marvelously shine, in the least of his works. But a dissipated Religious,

far from thinking of God; in seeing this flower, will make use of it to flatter her smelling & to fall into an immortification. All nature was, to the great Saint Antony, an open book in which he continually found almighty God & contemplated his adorable perfection & therefore the Author of the Imitation JESUS-CHRIST says again: [B. 2. c. 4. n. 1.
 „ If thy heart were right, then every creature would be to thee a looking glass
 „ a book of holy doctrine. There is no creature so little & vile, as not to represent
 „ the goodness of God. „

CLXXVIII.

It is by means of recollection, that a Religious acquires the spirit of prayer, a religion for meditation, & a holy compunction. The three gifts make a Religious, that has received them, enter deeper into an interior life & pious recollection. Beg of the Lord, with all earnestness, that he would grant you the gift of prayer. Do all you possibly can to obtain it. Spare neither mortification, nor watchfulness over yourself, nor practices of piety, nor fidelity, nor industry, to gain it. For if you have this happiness, you will have found a celestial treasure, a mine abounding with spiritual riches; & as a ship, that sails with a favourable wind, performs her voyage with an extraordinary swiftness, so will you advance in the way of perfection.

CLXXIX.

A Religious has acquired this spirit of prayer, when she perceives, with pleasure, the time of the office or of prayer approach, when she easily recollects herself at it; when

She leaves it with regret, & returns to it with joy. She has acquired this spirit, when she finds God in all, & praises him for all. She has acquired it, when her love for this holy exercise makes her profit of the least leisure, to recollect herself at the feet of God, to converse with him, heart to heart, to treat with him of the affairs of her soul, to ease herself, in the bosom of his mercy, of the pains & dangers of life. She has acquired the spirit of prayer, when she easily abandons all creatures for God, when she watches over her senses & over her heart, in order to preserve them from the infection of creatures, & that she may be able, without any hindrance, to recollect herself at prayer, & therein offer to almighty God a sacrifice of praise, with a greater liberty of mind & purity of heart. But how far distant from these excellent dispositions is a dissipated Religious; she, to whom prayer is a burden, who goes to it with reluctance, who is tired with it; who thinks the shortest even too long: who performs it without attention & without modesty; who hurrys it over with rapidity, to have the sooner done; who cuts off from it what she can, who sees the end of it with pleasure, who comes from it without recollection, & who profits nothing by it.

CLXXX.

The Saints found in prayer their strength against temptations, ease in their pains, courage in their tribulations, counsel in their difficulties, relief in their troubles of life, a reviving of their fervour in abjection or

remissness; a relish of God, holy tears of compunction & of joy, unexpressible comforts, a powerful means to advance, to arrive at, & maintain themselves in perfection. Thus in whatever state you find yourself, follow the example of the Saints, have recourse to prayer; but particularly when you are tempted; when you find your courage diminish; when you perceive you begin to grow remiss; when you are disheartened at your difficulties in the practice of virtue; when you see you do not correct yourself of your faults, or that you have an extreme repugnance in overcoming yourself, to make a sacrifice of what God demands of you; when, in short, you are even disgusted with prayer, & feel in yourself nothing but an aversion to it; you must, in all these cases, pray & persevere in it; you must strive, by a holy importunity, to obtain of God what you desire he should grant you. He often, at the end of prayer, or after a long continuance in it; grants in effect, what he seemed to deny at the beginning; & when you think he is deaf, & that it is in vain you cry to him; it is often then he is ready to hear you, & crowns, with a particular blessing, the faithfulness you had in overcoming the tediousness of a long expectation.

CLXXXI.

The Religious, who are devoted by their state to sing the praises of God; ought to do it with a singular respect, a holy joy & alacrity; thinking themselves, on the one side, very much honour'd in being thereby associated to the blessed Saints in their function

& finding, on the other, in singing of the office, an excellent exercise of the virtue of Religion & of holy love. In these sentiments, the choir-Sisters ought to esteem their state, as a grace deserving all their acknowledgements, & ought to look upon reciting their office, as one of their principal duties, which does not admit of any slothfulness, laziness, or negligence; but even demands & requires all their fervour, all their attention, all their devotion.

CLXXXII.

The other Sisters, who in the Monastery are assigned to the labours of Martha; may in their exterior occupations partake, by the sanctity & holiness of their intention, of the merit of those Sisters, who in the choir perform the functions of Mary. They will have a share therein, if, while these are singing the praises of the Lord, they, on their side, unite themselves to their prayers in desire & affection; if they offer their work to God, with an intention to glorify him, as the others glorify him in singing his praises; & if content with the state in which divine Providence has placed them, they look upon it as a pleasure to leave to the others all the pleasure to praise the Lord, in exempting them, by their labours, from the solicitude of temporal occupations. Thus you, who charged with the care of preparing dinner for a large Community, are so much taken up, as to have almost no time to pray; envy not the happiness of the servants of God, who sing his praises; you will partake of their merit, if for God's sake, you acquit yourself

400 THE PERFECT

of your laborious employ ; & the disposing all for their food & nourishment, will be a tribute of praise you will render to almighty God , & for which he will not less reward you , than those , whose lot , so much according to your devotion , you would be tempted to desire.

CLXXXIII.

The Saints in heaven do three things : they see God , they love God , they praise God ; & let us add , they are absorpt & lost in God. This is what a Religious may do here on earth , tho' imperfectly , but always with a great deal of merit & consolation. First , she may see God , in studying & endeavouring always to know him more & more , by the exercise of his holy presence. She may love at all times , but above all by the exercise of fervent prayer ; she may praise him by singing the Psalms & holy Canticles : let us add : she may be lost & absorpt in God , by holy Communion. The more devoutly a Religious acquits herself of these four exercises , the more also will her way of life resemble that of the heavenly spirits. Oh how comfortable it ought to be to her , to be able to say with truth : I am by my state more particularly called to those functions , which enable me to lead the life of the inhabitants of the celestial Jerusalem.

CLXXXIV.

Penetrated with these sentiments , a Religious ought to go readily to choir , as soon as the bell rings. She must neither be slothful , nor backward ; when it is to praise the Lord. She must bring to it a mind recol-

ted, & a heart glowing with fervour; & banish, as much as she can, from her thoughts, the remembrance of all creatures. But how far are those from these dispositions; who, to stay a few moments longer in the Parlour at their idle talk, are afterwards obliged to run in a hurry, to be in time for the beginning of the office, & who consequently did not allow themselves one single moment, to recollect their thoughts in going to it, & who with their wild dissipated looks, & their mind full of a thousand frivolous things they have just heard, scarce know what they do, nor what they say in reciting the office; they are so little present to themselves, & less to God.

CLXXXV.

But when a Religious is in the actual exercise of singing the office; how great ought to be her reservedness over her senses, how attentive the application of her mind, how inflamed the elevation of her heart towards God? Ought not every thing in her to be angelical & celestial, since she performs the functions of the Angels in heaven? Thus singing or reciting of the office gravely, according to the rules & ceremonies prescribed, with a modest & serious countenance, the eyes cast down, the senses recollected, the mind quietly attentive, the soul penetrated with respect, & melting with love; her prayer is like an exquisite perfume that ascends to heaven, which the Angels carry to the foot of the throne of the most high, who receives it as a sacrifice of sweet odour to him.

402 THE PERFECT
CLXXXVI.

Such as a good Religious endeavoured to be in going to the office ; such also ought she to be in coming from it. No levity , no idle discourse , no dissipation ; but gravity , reservedness , silence , recollection ; lest , by being quickly & soon distracted , she might lose that holy recollection she had in singing the divine office , that the devil should in some measure , rob her of the fruit she reaped in prayer. This ought principally to be recommended to the Novices & young professed , that they may contract a holy custom of it ; but it need not be recommended to those who are truly recollected in time of the office , or who have their progress in perfection at heart ; because the spirit of recollection & the desire of advancing in piety will excite them to this holy practice.

CLXXXVII.

Make use of a holy industry , to keep yourself in a due attention in time of the office ; but do not torture your mind , by a too earnest application & overstraining it : apply yourself calmly & affectionately. Enliven , from time to time , this application ; by exciting yourself to fervour , or to the love of God ; for example , at the beginning of every Psalm. Occupy yourself with the thoughts of the presence of God , or of any other subject suitable to the heavenly function you are performing. Let your heart be penetrated with the infinite greatness of the God you praise. Consider yourself sometimes as carried before his throne , where you are associated to the burning Seraphims that in-

RELIGIOUS. 403

cessantly sing : Holy , Holy , Holy , in his divine presence. Often thus raise your mind to heaven , & join yourself to the Saints & Angels. Excite your heart to fervour , & abandon it to all the ardour it is capable of. If you feel none ; pray to the Lord with a penitent mind , & an humble heart. Be ashamed & confounded at your repidity ; & judge yourself unworthy , in this lukewarm cold disposition , to be in company with the heavenly spirits , who burn for God , with a flame so pure & so ardent : keep yourself by humility in your meanness , & as it were , at the gates of heaven ; begging & praying the almighty , that he would restore fervour to you ; confiding with patience that he will grant it , not for your own merits & deserts , since you deserve nothing ; but thro' an excess of his infinite mercy.

CLXXXVIII.

How happy , & how greatly privileged , thought those Religious to esteem themselves ; who rise in the night , or early in the morning , to sing the praises of almighty God ! What a happiness for them to bless the Lord ; whilst the rest of the world is buried in sleep , or that the greatest part of those who are awake , keep themselves so only to offend him in play , feasting , rioting & debauchery. The silence , that then reigns thro' all nature , gives a great easiness to the mind to recollect it self , & inspires the heart with consolation , that more than recompenses the fervent Religious , for the pain her body might feel , by the interruption of her sleep. She has not then her mind taken up with

404 THE PERFECT

the ideas of the day ; her heart , offering to God the mortification of her watching , seasons , as it were , her prayer with the salt of penance. Ah ! how agreeable to almighty God is this prayer , which attention , fervour & mortification accompanies ; how it rejoices the Angels , & what blessings does it draw down on her soul ! O you , who have this precious advantage ; if in the day you pray with fervour , redouble it in this favourable time ; if in the day you are diligent at it , redouble your diligence in the night. You have only your repidity to overcome , to be exact at it in the day ; but in the night you must also overcome your sleep , & you have a double merit by it , as it is a double sacrifice ; a sacrifice , which far from seeming hard & painful ; ought , if you truly love God , to fill you with comfort ; since thereby you render unto him great glory , & procure to yourself a treasure of merit for an eternity. And truly these holy watchings were , in all times & ages , looked upon as most excellent practices of the Church ; the primitive Christians often used to watch ; it was one of the principal exercises of the Virgins consecrated to God ; all those who professed an ascetic life were equally addicted to prayer , fasting & watching. But as in our days this holy custom is no where kept up , but in Religious Communities , it behoves them faithfully to maintain it , & by their fidelity & fervour , to perpetuate it to the end of the world.

CLXXXIV.

When a Religious distinguishes , as I may say , between prayer & prayer ; & is less ac-

entive to that, because it is of no obligation, & more attentive to this, because she is obliged to it; what does she, but only shew she has very little the spirit of prayer, or the love of God. Let it be of obligation or pure devotion; is it not always the same God she prays to? Does he not always deserve the same respect, the same homage of our heart? You ought to consider, that as soon as ever you present yourself before him to pray, you are doing the function of the Angels; & consequently you ought to acquit yourself of it, in a manner altogether angelical. Whether it be the divine office, or the penance enjoined you in confession, or mass on Sundays & holidays; whether it be a prayer ordered by the rule, or the blessing of the table; or thanksgiving after, or the *Angelus*, at noon or night; whether it be a prayer, you impose on yourself so say in honour of some Saint, or out of any particular devotion, whether it be short or long: never say, if I do not say it, I sin grievously, lightly, or not at all; if I perform this ill, it is a greater sin, than if I should do that so. I would have you avoid, not only great & grievous sins, but even the lesser ones, & the least, as much as your frailty does permit. I would have you glorify almighty God, with all your heart by whatever prayer it is you say; & would have you reap the fruits & blessings that attend it, when it is well performed.

CXC.

Let us say the same of mental prayer, as we said of the divine office. The same preparation in going too it; the same applica-

406 THE PERFECT

tion of the powers of the soul in making it the same recollection in coming from it. But my God ! What is not the prayer of an interior Religious ; that is , of a Religious disengaged from creatures ; mortified in herself , zealous for her perfection ; wholly devoted to the service & love of God ! A heart so holily prepared , is like an excellent soil , which the dews of heaven falling on it in a sweet gentle abundance , refresh by their fertility. O how marvelous , & how worthy of all the emulation of our souls are those fruits of life we may gather from meditation , performed with these dispositions ! How much are the Religious , who do not strive to become interior , in the wrong to deprive themselves , by their slothfulness & by their dissipation or childish amusements , of making a progress in so profitable an exercise ; from which they might draw most particular graces , & receive the greatest consolations.

CXCI.

Among all the exercises which Religion furnishes religious persons with , to succeed in an interior life ; there are three , which ought to be particularly esteemed , & whose excellence no one , without doubt , will or can deny. To wit , recollection , mental prayer & frequent communion. If a Religious keeps herself retired & in recollection ; if she applies herself to make her meditation well ; if she often approaches to holy Communion & endeavours to dispose herself for it the best she can ; as a poplar , planted near the running waters , grows & soon becomes a tree ; so this Religious will be almost per-

RELIGIOUS. 467

ceptibly seen to raise herself very high, in the perfection of her state; she will always be more humble, more mild, more submissive, more patient, more charitable, more courteous, more peaceable, more modest, more regular; she will go from virtue, to virtue. Almighty God will communicate himself to her, by his most familiar inspirations; & what will pass in her interior, will be far more admirable & edifying, than all that outwardly appears by the virtues we mention'd; because this edifying exterior will only be an overflowing of the fullness & plenitude of those spiritual goods, in which her soul is absorbed & drowned.

CXCII.

A Religious ought to place her sweetest consolation in mental prayer. She ought always to go to it with a new relish, & only come from it out of submission to the will of God. She should look upon it as her element & bed of rest; where, as I may say, sleeping in the arms of her divine Spouse, by the depth & quietness of her recollection, she eases herself of the commerce of creatures, always troublesome to a soul that seeks & relishes God; she makes herself inends for the time her external occupations ob'd her of, & which she was obliged to allow for the care of her body; & in short comforts herself in the midst of the pains of this miserable life, on the length of her exile, & distance of her heavenly country, alas! you, who think an hour of meditation extremely long; who reckon this exercise as one of the most difficult in Religion;

408 THE PERFECT

who never complain too much time is allowed for recreation ; who always esteem the time of your refection too short ; & that too little is given you to sleep ; who love every thing that pampers the body , & to whom prayer seems so difficult ; how much I pity you , to be so much given to your senses , & so little to the holy exercises of the spirit of an interior Religious. Give ear to what the devout soul says in the book of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST. (B. 3. c. 26. n. 2.) “ Preserve me I beseech thee , O merciful God , from the cares of this life , that I be not too much entangled by them , from the many necessities of the body , that I may not be ensnared with pleasure. . . . Turn into bitterness to me all carnal comfort , which withdraws me from the love of things eternal , & wickedly allures me to itself , by setting before me a certain present delightful good. . . . Give me in lieu of all the comforts of this world , the most delightful unction of thy spirit , & instead of carnal love , infuse into me the love of thy name. Behold eating , drinking , cloathing & other necessities appertaining to the support of the body , are burdensome to a fervent spirit. , Would to God , that pious sentiments become yours ; & that a relish for holy meditation would banish from you that which you have for the vain consolations of the world ! Would to God , that being sensible of what are the true goods that are fit for you , you no more follow the attraction of the senses , & despising whatever is terrestrial & carnal , you had

no other pleasure & delight, than to contemplate, in meditation, what is celestial & spiritual? Who, without tears, can behold a Religious soul, that only ought to live for heaven, only ought to relish the things of heaven; find nevertheless meditation troublesome? Who can behold her go to it against her will, to be tired at it, & rejoice when it is done? Can any one, without grief, see her think whole hours, spent in idle talk & vain discourses at the grate, too short; & to allow with regret half an hour for mental prayer? Is it not to her we may address the words of the Imitation of JESUS - CHRIST: [B. 1. c. 22. n. 4.] "O senseless people & infidels in heart; who lie buried so deep in earthly things, as to relish nothing but the things of the flesh! Miserable wretches! They shall in the end find, to their cost, how vile a nothing that was, which they so much loved.,,

CXCIII.

Recover yourself, in prayer from the distractions of your mind, as soon as you perceive them; & calmly bring back this fugitive vagabond to the sacred feet of JESUS - CHRIST; to subject & bend it, in spite of its inconstancy, to the sweet yoke of his divine truths. Bring it back a hundred times, or rather as often as it goes astray & escapes from you; be not tired, have patience. A meditation spent in fighting against the distractions of the mind, & in bringing it back to its duty with patience, will not be spent in vain; but will bring forth fruit in its proper time. If your mind cannot stick to any

reflexion ; endeavour to pour forth your heart in holy affections ; if your heart is so dry , as to be incapable of any ; humble yourself in the sight of God , & keep yourself in his holy presence ; making from time to time acts sometimes of faith , sometimes of hope , sometimes of desire , sometimes of sorrow & compunction &c. &c. as you find yourself inclined. Never be in prayer , without doing something ; either the mind or the heart must be employ'd ; & when fervour is wanting , make use of an interior humiliation & an acknowledgment of your misery. Besides , take care not to leave off , or any ways shorten your meditation , on account of the heaviness or weariness you suffer in it ; this would be an infidelity & cowardice ; the devil himself would ask no more of you ; but bear this tediousness with patience , & with a spirit of mortification & penance. Make use of it to humble yourself the more , in being ashamed to be so dry , so arid , so slack in this holy exercise ; esteeming yourself , of all the Religious actually employ'd in it , the person who performs it the worst. Annihilate yourself , in the presence of the Lord , by a humble confession of your extreme misery. This doubtless will be a meditation well made , & from which you will receive more benefit , than you even dared to hope for.

CXCIV.

Go not to meditation , in view of meeting with consolations ; this intention would be faulty , & would shew you are more attached to the comforts of God , than to the God of comfort. Go to it , to accomplish his d

RELIGIOUS. 411

vine will, to be taught his holy truths, to be spiritually nourished with his heavenly maxims, to receive the light you stand in need of, & the fervour which is so necessary for you to repair the forces of your soul by interior recollection, to breath out holy affections, to make resolutions proper to your state; & to say all in a few words: go to it in order to learn to correct yourself of your faults, to excite yourself more & more to the practice of virtues, & to unite yourself most strictly to almighty God. The want of intention & of resolution to profit by meditation, is often the cause we reap no fruit from it; & how many Religious might not be reproached with going to it, without proposing to themselves any ways to profit by it; but barely go thro' custom, because it is the hour, & they must follow the common track. They assist at it without attention, & come from it with their mind & heart as empty of God, as if they came from the Parlour, where nothing was talk'd of but new & unknown worlds.

CXCv.

An immediate preparation before meditation is not to be neglected; but I dare venture to say, a more remote one deserves our greatest attention. If you have this, the other will come of it self, & your meditation will readily follow. The more you accustom your mind, in the day time, to think of God; the greater facility you will have to render yourself attentive in meditation. The more, in the day time, you disentangle your heart from all affection to creatures; the more you will

412 THE PERFECT

find yourself disposed to recollect your mind, & inflame your heart interiorly at meditation. What will the acts of an immediate preparation avail you, if before hand you have given a free entry into your mind, to whatever presented it self to the senses; if having done nothing else, than talk, than give ear to others, than inform yourself of all that passed, than ramble from one place to another in the Monastery; you filled your head with frivolous ideas? They will always, after you have made your acts of an immediate preparation, occur to your mind; & whatever you thought of before, will represent it self to your imagination, more lively than ever; because having, on the one side, your mind always before you, you will meet nothing there, but what you have stock'd it with; & because, on the other, the devil always attentive to hinder you from performing your meditation well, will recall to your mind whatever is able to distract it, your own past thoughts, as well as others which his malice will suggest. The same will happen, as to the affections your heart is entangled with; if it is with a friend, you will only think of her, of what she told you, of what she has done, of the friendship she has for you; of the pleasure she procured you, of the service you render her &c. &c. If it is with a piece of work; you will think how you must go about it, how you may soon finish it, how much as yet there remains to be done, whether it will be handsome, when finished &c. &c. We may at all times say: where our treasure is, there our

heart is also ; but it may be said more particularly , in time of meditation. If your treasure , or the subject of your affections consists in trifles , in vain amusements of friends , in idle discourses ; your mind & heart will be there also ; you will think only of those things , you will have no inclination but for those things ; scarce will you have one good thought on the subject of your meditation , perhaps a flying thought , that makes no impression on the heart : the principal of your reflections will always run upon what you have at heart : & your heart , thus tied & fettered , will always turn to that side. You resemble a sheep , that has only browsed upon poor & unwholesom pastures , & consequently can only chew again the grafs she eat.

CXCVI.

Let the Novices be well instructed in these truths , & let them be made to understand , that unless they accustom themselves to recollection in the day time , & not to attach themselves to vain things ; they will be very little disposed to make any progress in meditation. You will tell them , that to perform it well , they must beg the light of Heaven , must make an act of faith , place themselves in the presence of God , implore the assistance of the blessed Virgin , Saint Joseph , of their Angel Guardian , of their Patron ; that they must ask God's pardon for their faults , & make other acts , proper to draw down his blessing on their meditation. All this is very well & good , but it is only the least part of their preparation. Teach them to provide for themselves , at a greater distance , against

414 THE PERFECT

the inconstancy of their mind, & dryness of their heart; often repeat to them not to dissipate themselves, to raise their mind frequently to God, not to let their head be filled with a thousand frivolous things, nor their heart with so many little ties; & you will soon see, by the account they will give you of their meditation; that they were attentive at it, & touched with those truths of salvation, set them for the subject of their meditation.

CXCII.

A Religious ought always to be so well prepared for meditation, as not to stand in need, when she goes to it, of taking any farther measures to recollect herself in God. Her life ought to be a continual exercise of holy meditation; so that when she goes from her work or her cell to the choir, to make her meditation with her Sisters; she may be said to go from one prayer to another, or from the meditation she made at work, to that she is going to make with the Community. We do not pretend to require it should be with the same application; but our meaning is, that she ought to keep herself so well in recollection & the presence of God, as much as human frailty does permit, as to be in an immediate disposition of going to mental prayer, without it's being necessary for her to make any efforts, to disengage herself from exterior objects, & to recollect herself in the presence of God.

CXCVIII.

Do not aspire of yourself to a high state of prayer; keep yourself, as much as you can, to ordinary & common meditation; but do

not obstinately refuse to ascend higher, should it please almighty God to grant you the favour; follow then his orders, with humility & docility; nevertheless, do it not without the advice of your Director, if you have a mind not to be deceived by your own imagination, or by the artifice of the Angel of darkness; you might easily take for a call, what would only be an effect of your mind struck, either by reading mystical Authors, or by conversing with people, that talk a great deal of the sublime degrees & states of prayer, or by a sort of ambition & desire of those states. The mind, often dazzled with what we read or hear of this high-flown prayer, inspires the heart with a desire of arriving at them; but a proof that this desire is only an effect of curiosity or of some secret vanity is, that we feed ourselves with fine speculations, without exercising & practising the virtues, which mortify & bring self-love into subjection. And it is common enough to hear those speak of high spirituality, who are as unfaithful to God, as the most tepid; who are prejudiced in their own favour, full of themselves, great gossips, wedded to their own opinion & to their own will; who startle at crosses & humiliations, & whose virtue, in short, is nowhere to be found, but on their tongue.

CXCIX.

Often take for the subject of your meditation, the life & death of our Lord JESUS-CHRIST. Study his divine maxims, & let them penetrate into your heart, that you may be imbibed with his true spirit. How

416 THE PERFECT

few have an evangelical spirit, & consequently, how few are there truly & solidly spiritual? We attach ourselves to pious speculations, sometimes too lofty, out of our reach, too vague, & often little practised. In studying JESUS-CHRIST, & his holy doctrine, we find all that is necessary to arrive at perfection. "A religious man," says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 1. c. 25. n. 6.) "who exercises himself, seriously & devoutly, in the most holy life, & Passion of our Lord, shall find there abundantly all things profitable & necessary for him. Nor need he seek for any thing better, out of JESUS. O if JESUS crucified, did but come into our heart, how quickly & sufficiently learn'd should we be!,"

CC.

It is by seriously reflecting on the life & maxims of JESUS-CHRIST; that we acquire his spirit, imbibe his sentiments, & learn the practice of virtues. It is by meditating on his example & on his doctrine, entirely celestial; that we judge of the world as we ought, & set that value on spiritual things, which is their due. A Religious, taught in the school of JESUS-CHRIST, by a holy custom of meditating on his mysteries, & on the divine lessons he gives us in his holy Gospel; a Religious, whose mind is convinced of, & whose heart is penetrated with these truths; a Religious, in short, who has thoroughly studied JESUS-CHRIST; thinks no more of the things here below, according to the false prejudice of corrupt nature; she has no more esteem for what dazzles the blind children

of the world, for what they seek with so much ardour, for what they love with so much passion, for what enslaves & ties them down so closely to the earth; she has quite opposite sentiments; she looks upon riches as dirt; upon honours as smoak; on pleasures as amusements, unworthy of her attention; she esteems & values nothing but what can conduct her to God. Crosses seem to her favours from Heaven; she thinks herself much honoured & very happy, when God pleases to visit her with any; her affections are wholly fixed on Heaven, which she considers as her true country. In a word, a Religious who has truly put on JESUS-CHRIST, by meditating on his life & holy doctrine, has acquired a heavenly wisdom; wisdom, which may appear a folly to those who are led away with the spirit of the world, but which is the holy folly of the cross, by which all the wisdom of the world is convicted of true folly, of imposture, of error, of falsehood & illusion.

CCI.

O how happy is a Religious, when she has acquired this evangelical wisdom, by a well digested study of the doctrine of our Lord JESUS-CHRIST! O how happy is she, when she has learnt at the feet of JESUS, to set a greater value on simplicity, than on all the fine talents of the mind; on religious modesty, than on all corporal beauty; on humiliations, than on honours; on mortification, than on pleasures; on poverty, than on pomps & riches; on an humble dependence, than on the sovereignty of Kings.

418 THE PERFECT

How happy is she, when she has learnt of **JESUS-CHRIST**, to make no account of all transitory things, to disengage her affections from all worldly objects, to look on all that is about her as indifferent which does not concern her, to consider herself in this life, as in a pilgrimage, to raise incessantly her desires to eternity ! How-happy at length is a Religious, when she has so fully & entirely devoted herself to **JESUS-CHRIST**, as for him to be all in all to her ; when she counts whatever the world offers her, as dung, after the example of the great Apostle, so that she may gain **JESUS-CHRIST** : (Phil. c. 3. v. 8.) when she is so well settled & fixed in **JESUS-CHRIST**, & has so well imbibed his spirit & his celestial maxims, that she is become, in some measure, the same with him ; thinking only as he thinks, willing nought but what he wills, esteeming & loving nothing but what he esteems & loves, seeking him alone, loving him only, & reposing in him entirely ; so that she may add, with the same Apostle, (Gal. 2. v. 19. 20.) *With CHRIST I am nailed to the cross, & I live now, not I, but JESUS-CHRIST liveth in me.* This is truly evangelical wisdom, & we cannot better arrive at it, than by seriously & profoundly meditating on the life & doctrine of our Lord **JESUS-CHRIST** ; and therefore the Author of the Imitation of **JESUS-CHRIST** lays down, as a foundation of all the truths, he has established in his excellent book, with so much unction & edification, this great maxim : (B. 1. c. 1. n. 1.) “ Let it be our chief study, to meditate on the life of **JESUS-CHRIST** ;

because the doctrine of CHRIST surpasseth
all the doctrines of the Saints, and who-
soever hath the spirit, will find therein a
hidden manna. „

CCII.

Prefer also, in your meditations, those sub-
jects, which are most adapted to make you
know yourself & to inspire you with courage
to correct your faults or with a true con-
trition for your sins; to those, which might
in reality flatter your mind, but will not
instill into you practical sentiments, for the
amending your faults, or acquiring virtue.
Meditation is not a speculative study of the
truths of Religion; & even Contemplation,
that does not produce in your heart a desire
of correcting yourself more & more; that
does not animate you to mortify yourself &
to use an evangelical violence; that does not
excite you to sacrifice to God whatever may
displease him in you, & does not raise you
up to him by the steps of virtue; such a
contemplation, I say, ought to be suspected
of illusion. This made the great Saint Fran-
cis of Sales say: (Treat. of the love of God
B. 7. c. 6.) “ If the ecstasy is more pleasing
than good, more lightsome than warm,
more speculative than affective; ’tis greatly
to be doubted & deserves to be suspected. „
And this also makes the Author of the Imita-
tion of JESUS-CHRIST say: (B. 2. c. 10. n. 3.)
“ I would not have any such consolation, as
will rob me of compunction; nor do
I affect such contemplation as leads to
pride; for all that is high, is not holy;
nor all that is pleasant, good; nor every

420 THE PERFECT

„ desire pure ; nor is every thing , that is
 „ pleasing & dear to us , pleasing to God.
 „ I willingly accept of that grace , which
 „ makes me always more humble & fearful ,
 „ & more ready to forsake myself. „

CCIII.

Apply yourself strenuously, by means of meditation , to obtain a compunction of heart. This compunction is the mother of holy tears , salutary grief & amorous lamentations. Three things chiefly excite in us this holy compunction ; the faults we have committed ; the dangers we are exposed to , in this life , of committing them every moment ; & our distance from the celestial country. What is there here below that can rejoice a soul , when she is penetrated with these three things ? The consideration of them is a source of tears , that never dries ; she only supports herself in this world , because God leaves her in it , & she must submit herself to his divine will. O how happy would you be , if you was in this holy disposition , & if you had obtained of God this grace of compunction !

CCIV.

The Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST , convinced of the excellency & effects of a holy compunction , recommends it to us in divers places of his book , & sets before our eyes , with a lively energy & full of unction , the motives we have to excite us to it in meditation. He recommends it to us saying : [B. I. c. 21. n. 1.] “ Give thyself to
 „ compunction of heart , & thou shalt find
 „ devotion ; for compunction opens the way
 „ to

to much good, which dissolution is wont quickly to lose. „ He proposes the means of obtaining it when he says. (B. 1. c. 20. n. 5.) If thou wouldst find compunction in thy heart, retire into thy chamber, & shut out the tumults of the world, as it is written : *have compunction in your chambers.* (Pf. 4.) „ He proposes the first motive to excite us to when he says. (B. 3. c. 4. n. 2.) “ Think on thy sins, with great compunction & sorrow..... For thou art indeed, a sinner subject to & intangled with many passions. „ He goes on & furnishes us with the second motive saying. “ Of thy self, thou always tendest to nothing, thou quickly fallest, thou art quickly overcome, easily disturbed & dissolved. „ He proposes infine the third motive, when he makes the devout soul break out into these lamentations, on the miseries of this life. (B. 3. c. 20. n. 3.) *Alas* what kind of life is this, where afflictions & miseries are never wanting, where all things are full of snares & enemies ? For when one tribulation or temptation is gone, another cometh ; yea & whilst the first conflict still lasts, many others come on, & those unexpected. „ Lastly he proposes another just reason to enter into the sentiments of compunction, in seeing the pains of others, when he says (B. 1. c. 21. n. 4.) “ A good man always finds subject enough for mourning & weeping, for whether he considers himself, or thinks of his neighbour ; he knows that no man lives here, without tribulation ; & the more thoroughly he considers himself, the more he grieves. „

422 THE PERFECT

CCV.

Sometimes, in meditation, we are so lively struck with the sight of our sins, as to be scarce able to bear it; & with extreme pain indure ourselves, so hideous we appear to our own eyes; God also, on his side, makes us feel his reproaches, in so severe a manner, as if he was armed & ready to dart his thunderbolts against us; this throws us into a fear & dread, which almost casts us quite down. In these occasions, we must not imitate the conduct of Adam, who ran & hid himself, when he heard the voice of God; but we must profoundly humble ourselves, under his divine hand; we must with docility bear his reproaches; we must submit & annihilate ourselves at his feet, in the sentiments of a lively compunction, & implore with an humble fear his mercy; without ever abandoning ourselves to diffidence or despair, & without turning away our sight altogether from our own indignity, that we may not bear the confusion of it, in the presence of God, who makes us feel it so sharply & so severely.

CCVI.

Should God favour you, in meditation, with a sensible relish of devotion, & make you feel his divine comforts; do not reject them, but receive them with humility & thanksgiving. Do not strain yourself, to augment their sensibility & sweetness; which would only tend to satisfy self-love; but calmly follow their attraction, & make it serve to render your affections more lively & more ardent. Make use of them also to encourage you

the more , to devote yourself entirely to the will of God ; to overcome the difficulties , you meet in his service ; to conquer your natural repugnancy ; to subdue your passions, & amend yourself more efficaciously of your faults. Rely not in such a manner on these consolations , as to think the goodness of your meditation depends on them ; or so as to neglect it , when you have them not. “ When God gives spiritual comfort , ” says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST , (B. 2. c. 9. n. 4.) „ receive it with thanksgiving ; but know „ that it is the bounty of God , not thy „ merit. Be not puffed up , be not overjoyed , „ nor vainly presume ; but rather be more „ humble for this gift , & the more cautious „ & fearful in all thy actions ; for this hour „ will pass away , & temptation will follow. „

CCVII.

As you ought not to abuse the comforts you receive ; so you ought not to be cast down when you have them not. You must then avoid two faults , into which one is apt to fall. The one is to lose courage , as if almighty God had abandoned you ; the other is to remain in a sort of inaction , without doing any thing to excite a sensible fervour. God knows what he does , when he gives it you ; therefore you must not refuse it , under pretext of mortifying self-love , & you must make a lawful use of it , without attaching yourself to it ; but at the same time , when he takes it from you , you ought to be persuaded 'tis thro' your own fault , & in this view , you ought to bear the privation of it with humility & contrition , & you ought

humbly to ask almighty God's pardon for it, & conjure & entreat him to restore it to you; bearing it however with patience, if he defers to grant it, always persevering to ask it with submission to his will, as long as he thinks fit to deprive you of it. "Thou oughtest," says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 4. c. 15. n. 1.) "to seek the
 „ grace of devotion earnestly, to ask it fer-
 „ vently, to wait for it patiently, & confi-
 „ dently, to receive it thankfully, to keep
 „ it humbly, to work with it diligently."

CCVIII.

Never be idle at prayer; that is, the mind reflecting must animate the heart, & the heart animated must apply the mind again, to present the object to it with which it is moved & touched. If you find yourself attracted to the prayer of contemplation; take care & do not confound it with inaction, idleness & a false silence; in which you expect that God should do all; in which you neither think of any thing, nor excite yourself to one good thought; in which you keep yourself in an idle, passive state, and fall into tepidity & dryness, & very often into a spiritual lethargick sleep. The prayer of contemplation is far different; it is an effect of a true attraction, that draws & shuts you up within yourself; that interiorly occupies you in the presence of God, & keeps you amorously attached to him in a holy & respectful silence, & makes you have a relish of God with peace & tranquillity. It is easy to see how opposite this state is to a false quietude; & in truth their effects are

quite different; for quietism produces no one fruit of virtue in the soul, which comes from this pretended prayer without any inclination to good, & without the spirit of recollection; whereas in the prayer we speak of: one truly relishes almighty God; one has a mind to love him, & one loves him; one cleaves to him, & one does it; one comes from it more recollected, & is more inclined to retirement & silence, to the mortification of our senses, to an austere life, to the practice of virtues, & even of those that are the most contrary to nature & self-love; & in a word, to labour & work at acquiring perfection.

CCIX.

It often happens that a soul falls into great perplexities, when God draws her, from ordinary meditation to this prayer of contemplation, or of pure thought & union. The devil, on the one side, jealous of the great advantage she might reap from it, leaves no stone unturn'd to divert her from it; & the soul, on the other, accustom'd to make use of her imagination & employ her reason, to excite herself to formal & express acts; thinks she loses her time in this new state of prayer, & does nothing; & that she is idle & deceived, because her action is not so sensible & reflected, as in ordinary meditation; so that attracted, & fearing to follow the attraction, she knows not which way to resolve herself, & suffers extraordinary pains of mind, which, in some, last many years; either because they cannot resolve themselves to follow the call; or because they have not

426 THE PERFECT

a Director to fully resolve, encourage & shew them the way they ought to follow. If you find yourself in this case, resist not the spirit of God; abandon yourself to it with confidence, & take care lest by an ill grounded fear of avoiding a chimerical illusion, you fall into a real one, & deprive yourself of the great advantages which you would reap in the prayer, to which the goodness of God calls you. Here we may say: happy those souls who go down right to God, in all the uprightness of their heart; & who make themselves docile to his spirit, without too much listening to the vain reasonings of their own.

CCX.

This prayer of contemplation is not in the same degree, & of the same duration in all. Sometimes it is only for moments, more or less frequent; at other times it is longer; some are attracted all of a sudden, at the beginning of their prayer; others immediately after they have made some preparatory acts; others after having meditated a certain time; others again after having fought a long time against distractions, or suffered temptations & aridities, for the greatest part of their prayer. Now in all these cases either before you feel the attraction, or in the time of it, or when it ceases by intervals, or altogether; the conduct you ought, as near as possible to follow, is. First, you must not thrust yourself into this prayer of contemplation, but only follow it in as much as you feel yourself attracted to it. 2°. You ought never to go to meditation, without

RELIGIOUS. 427

prefixing to yourself a subject to consider, in
 case the attraction should fail. 3°. You always
 ought to begin by acts of immediate prepa-
 ration, unless you find yourself strongly &
 sweetly but really attracted; and then it is
 advisable, by a short act at least, to recom-
 mend yourself to God, & to abandon your-
 self to his will; which may be done in an
 instant, & without taking you off from your
 attraction. 4°. As long as you do not find
 yourself attracted; apply yourself to meditate
 & to make acts of different virtues, as your
 reflections shall furnish you, exciting yourself
 to them to animate & inflame your will.
 5°. Leave meditation & those acts, when the
 divine attraction draws you, & follow it
 quietly & with a full acquiescence of your
 will; do not interrupt it to meditate, &
 less to consider which way it works in you,
 & in what manner you find yourself; but
 let all your application be to answer it, to
 give yourself up to it purely, calmly &
 sweetly. 6°. Sometimes, in this attraction, you
 will find yourself penetrated with a respect-
 ful fear of the presence of God; other times
 you will experience a sensible feeling of his
 divine presence, or a plenitude of God that
 fills all the capacity of your soul, or as if
 you was totally absorbed in him. At other
 times it will consist in a gentle effusion of
 your heart into that of God, & in a sweet
 union beyond all you can express. Now
 your heart will feel a secret joy; a holy Ju-
 bilation, an interior alacrity, that it will
 leap again, as I may say, or it will be so
 penetrated with a desire of uniting it self to

428 THE PERFECT

God, that it will seem to go out of it's place, & with an amorous impetuosity, to dart, as it were, it self towards him. But at other times, it will be only an application to God more or less intimate, more or less sensible, or even accompanied with a certain aridity, which however is not a disgust, nor a true dryness, & still less an idleness, since the soul is always taken up with God, really loves him & keeps herself united to him. In all these different states or degrees of attraction, you must not divert yourself from it, as we have already said; but you must follow the different sentiments it inspires you with, without using any efforts, & rather by acquiescing than straining, & always proceeding calmly, sweetly & respectfully. 7°. Should the attraction cease by intervals, you ought to make those acts that are capable to move your affections, & to use the amorous effusions or breathings of your heart, to stir yourself up, & the more easily to regain recollection; but it is not necessary you should for that little while reassume your meditation; the affections hindring idleness, & making you better enter into recollection. 8°. Should it come to cease all together & at once; which will easily be known by the mind being in some measure tired & weary, by it's not being able to apply it self without pain, by the imagination being distracted & the body fatigued; then, if any time remains to do it, you may renew your ordinary meditation. We must here in short take notice, that sometimes, when the attraction to contemplation has ceased, whether thro' lass-

trude of the mind , or fatigue of the body
one thinks no more , the heart is no more
touch'd , & if care is not taken one falls
into a drowiness ; then also you ought to
renew your meditation & the acts that move
your affections , without which you would fall
into idleness ; & tho' you shou'd be easy , &
find yourself so ; that does not proceed from
the sweetness of the attraction , but from the
rest the body is in , & which would really
fall a sleep , was you to give way to it.

CCXI.

We will not enter into a more ample de-
tail of the different states of prayer , & above
all of extraordinary prayer , to which few per-
sons are elevated , & whereof the discussion
would lead us too far. Besides , there are
very large treatises composed on this subject,
which may be consulted , if necessary. We
shall only observe here , for the instruction
of the young Religious , who have not as
yet a great experience in prayer : that when
they have a difficulty to meditate , & cannot
reflect for any long time on a subject , they
ought to excite their affections , and then
reflect a little on their subject , & afterwards
excite their affections again ; & so alternately
go from reflections to these affections ,
& from them again to reflections. We ad-
monish also those who have made some pro-
gress in mental prayer , & are even arrived
at an extraordinary way of prayer ; that they
ought not for that to entirely abandon the
way of common meditation ; but they ought
to return to it , when they do not feel them-
selves attracted another way. We moreover

say : that a consideration & an affectionate devotion to the sacred humanity of **JESUS-CHRIST**, ought not to be excluded from the state of extraordinary prayer, as if this consideration should degrade a contemplative soul, & pull her down from her elevation in prayer. We say infine, that as the devil sometimes endeavours to insinuate his malicious suggestions, in the different states of prayer, which pious souls find themselves in; either by diverting them from their attraction by false alarms, or by deceiving them by illusions, or even by exciting disorderly impressions in their bodies, & that chiefly in the time they have any sensible consolations; they ought, in this last case to resist all these bad suggestions, & to take great care not to keep themselves, as to them, in a state of indifference, under the false pretext; that the mind, being united to God, it ought not to be interrupted & turn'd aside on their account; which doctrine would open a door to fanaticism & libertinism.

CCXII.

A Religious cannot flatter herself to have made any progress in prayer, if she has not learn't in it to carry the cross of **JESUS-CHRIST**, & so to walk in the steps of this divine Master. For the cross is what he promises to his most faithful Spouses, as he promised it to his Apostles; & it is in prayer that he particularly instructs them in the mysteries of the cross; makes them sensible of the necessity of carrying it; exhorts & encourages them to take it up; & resolve to have nailed upon it. Let a Religious begin to

perform her prayer well, the strong inspiration she will have to work at her own self-denial, will place the cross before her; let her still advance more in the holy way of prayer, the cross will be shewn her, by the sight of a more perfect self denial & of an entire mortification; let her be raised to sublime prayer; she will there find the cross by a thorough conviction, that she ought to live & die upon it.

CCXIII.

You ought then, in quality of a Spouse of the crucified Jesus, to look upon the cross at all times as your inheritance, & beloved portion; you ought to receive it from his hand with faith, with docility, with love, with gratitude. You ought to accept of it as a pledge of his tenderness, & as a sign of his alliance with you. If you shew any repugnancy, if you refuse to carry it, if you bear it with chagrin, with impatience, you are not a faithful Spouse; you are not worthy of this divine Spouse.

CCXIV.

You are but little acquainted with the designs of the mercy of God upon you, when you refuse the cross he presents you with. You are mightly mistaken when you think to fly from the cross; you will make it a great deal heavier & more troublesome, when you do not carry it with love, at least with submission. You will not embrace the cross? But has God ever exempted any Saint from it; he, who did not exempt his only Son, in whom he was well pleased? And shall his love for you establish another rule

of conduct, to gratify your self love, against the true interest of your soul? You strive & use all your endeavours to avoid the cross, but as the Author of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST says extremely well. (B. 2. c. 12. n. 4.)

„ The cross is always ready & every where
 „ waits for thee, thou canst not escape it.....
 „ Turn thy self upwards, or turn thyself
 „ downwards, turn thyself without, or turn
 „ thyself within thee; & every where thou
 „ shalt find the cross, & every where thou
 „ must of necessity have patience, if thou
 „ desirest inward peace, & wouldest merit
 „ an eternal crown. „

CCXV.

The Author of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST has reunited, in the Chapter we have just cited, all that can be said instructive & edifying on the indispensable necessity we lie under of carrying the cross, on the motives that ought to engage us to it, & on the means of doing it with fruit & merit. But let a Religious particularly weigh the following words. (Ibid.) “ There is no other
 „ way to life & to true internal peace, but
 „ the way of the holy cross. Go where thou
 „ wilt, seek what thou wilt, & thou shalt
 „ not find a higher way above, nor a safer
 „ way below, than the way of the holy cross.
 „ Dispose & order all things according as
 „ thou wilt & seems best to thee, & thou
 „ shalt still find something to suffer, either
 „ willingly or unwillingly; & so thou shalt
 „ still find the cross: for either thou shalt
 „ feel pain in the body, or sustain in the
 „ soul tribulation of spirit. Sometimes thou
 „ shalt

„ shalt be afflicted by thy neighbour, &
 „ what is more, thou shalt often be a trouble
 „ to thy self; neither canst thou be deli-
 „ vered or eased by any remedy or com-
 „ fort, but as long as it shall please God,
 „ thou must bear it. „

CCXVI.

We may see by this, that it is the design
 of almighty God we should suffer in this life,
 & it is not with a view meerly of afflicting
 us; but by a disposition of his mercy, that pu-
 rifies us by these trials, & vivifies us by
 these mortifications. Thus this design of sal-
 vation, this order of his divine mercy, is what
 we ought to acknowledge in all the crosses
 he sends us, in sickness, in temptations,
 in our interior pains, even the most grievous,
 in contradictions & in other different tribu-
 lations.

CCXVII.

There are many persons, & even pious,
 who look upon the time of sickness, particu-
 larly if it is long, as that in which they can
 reap the least advantage for their souls, &
 work the least at their spiritual progress. Let
 us here harken to the frivolous complaints
 of a sick Religious, who gives into this illu-
 sion. If I was well, I would get up early in
 the morning, as others do; I would observe
 all the other points of the rule, as the others;
 I should be serviceable to Religion, as they
 are; I should not be a burden to them; I
 would acquit my self of all my duties, &
 should be incommodious to no one. You
 think you reason rightly, & tell us wonders;
 but you are grossly mistaken. What do you

434 THE PERFECT

seek? What do you desire? Is it your salvation, is it your perfection? Will you make the one & the other consist more in doing what the others do, than in accomplishing the will of God? Are you ignorant the more you conform yourself to his divine will, the more holy & the more perfect you are? What have you then to desire for saving your soul, but to accomplish the will of God; whether it be in health or in sickness, in a faithful observance of the rule, or in an humbling necessity of being dispensed from it, on account of your infirmities? Fear when you are chagrined at not being able to do as the others, lest this chagrin & anxiety should be an effect of your pride, more than of a true zeal for regular observance; should proceed more from an apprehension you have of being reproached with being good for nothing, than from a truly pure desire of pleasing God, by fulfilling all the duties of a Religious. O how subtle is self-love, & how often does it deceive us under the pretext of good! It often makes us desire what we are not able to do, to hinder us from performing that which is actually in our power.

CCXVIII.

Receive from the hand of God the sickness he sends you, be it what it will; if it is painful, or only troublesome; if it is humbling & makes you burdensome to others, or if it has nothing that shocks your natural vanity; if it is long & frequent, or only for a few days. All that God does is good; all he sends us is good; we ought to receive it with respect & thanks. A Religious is far

from this disposition, who would never be sick, or would at least choose that kind of sickness, which is the least contrary to her will. Who ought best to know what is convenient for you, & who ought more to dispose of you, than he who is the Sovereign Master of all? Does it belong to you to give him orders, to question his designs, to prescribe rules to his wisdom, & to direct his providence? You have no other right here, than that of accepting what God wills, of bearing it humbly, & of acknowledging he knows infinitely better what is fit for you, than you do yourself.

CCXIX.

What acts of virtue can you not practise in time of sickness? It is true you can neither watch with the others, nor fast as they do, nor make use of corporal austerities, nor work, nor be in any employ in the Monastery; but you can be submissive & obedient to the will of God, & offer the will & desire you have of doing what the others do, had you your health as they have. You can accept in a spirit of mortification, the pains, the lingring, the remedies, the tedious and loathsome subjections of your sickness. You can in a spirit of humility suffer the pain you have, to give so much trouble to the others; you can exercise an obedience very agreeable to God, in entirely submitting your will to the infirmarian, tho she may be your inferior, either on account of age or of any other title; you can, in short on your bed or sitting in your chair, love almighty God, & glorify him by your meekness & your pa-

436 THE PERFECT

tience, as your Sisters glorify him when they sing his praises in the choir.

CCXX.

In time of sickness, be not anxious for your cure, nevertheless make use of the remedies, & take all the ease & refreshments that are ordered you. Leave the entire care of all that regards your body, to the charity of the Superior or of the sick Mother. Live under the wings of Providence, without uneasiness as to the good or bad issue of your sickness, and under the vigilance of the Reverend Mother or Infirmarian, without solicitude as to your wants & necessities. Reserve to yourself only the care of suppressing all vain desires, all anxious solicitude, & do all that is required of you for your recovery; not so much out of a desire to be cured, as to have in the sight of God the merit of obedience.

CCXXI.

It is a great imperfection to seek remedies with too much eagerness, or to refuse those that are offered, because they are either loathsome, or painful. What in reality can be thought of a Religious, who for the least indisposition, cries out for help, & would have all the druggs of An apothecary's shop prescribed her; or of one who cannot resolve to take a medicine, without having first disputed for an hour with the Infirmarian, and tried her patience? The first is extremely fond of life, the second knows nothing of mortification, & both the one & the other are very far from the virtue of an interior Religious.

CCXXII.

If I am sick, perhaps some one may say,

it is my own fault, it is because I followed my inclinations, my indiscretion, my imprudence; I ought not therefore to look on my sickness, as coming from the hand of God, but as a consequence of my own faults; & if it hinders me from observing the rule & doing as others do, it is with reason I am grieved at it, & I cannot submit myself to it as a cross, that comes from the will of God. Here then is what troubles you & gives you so much uneasiness? To calm you, let us yield something to your way of thinking, but let us at the same time give to God what is his due. What comes from you is your indiscretion & imprudence; which are faults not to be attributed to God; & for which you are in the right to be sorry; but what comes from God is the sickness, occasioned indeed by your indiscretion, but of which God is also the Author, as it is no sin, & which you ought to accept as a punishment of your fault, & as a cross which God will have you carry with submission. But it deprives me, say you, of the happiness of assisting at choir, of making my meditation, of going to communion, & of practising the austerities of your rule; it does so; but accept likewise of this privation in the spirit of penance, & with an humble submission to the orders of God; & his goodness is so great, that he will be well pleased with your penance & submission.

CCXXIII.

„ As long as we live in this world, we cannot be without tribulation & temptation, „ says excellently well the Author

of the Imitation of JESUS - CHRIST. (B. 1. c. 13. n. 1.) But if this is true for all in general, we may more particularly apply it to those who consecrate themselves to God in a special manner; for which reason the wise man says, (Eccl. c. 2. v. 1.) *Son, if thou comest to the service of God, prepare thy soul for temptation.* We must not be surpris'd at it. The more we would work at our perfection, the greater will be the devil's efforts to thwart our designs, & his fury will augment in proportion to our fervour. Besides, nature that abhors all constraint, & which virtue keeps within strict bounds, will not fail to maintain it self, & will give us a deal of trouble. In a word, God permits us to be tempted to try our fidelity, to oblige us to watch over ourselves, to have a diffidence in our own strength, & to have recourse to him by prayer; to make us grow in merit, by the victories we gain over our temptations. A Religious ought not therefore to be astonished at temptation, nor think herself lost when she feels it more strong & more frequent, nor conceive in her mind she had better have staid in the world; which is one of the most dangerous artifices of the evil spirit, to give Religious persons a disgust for their state; but she ought to have recourse to God, profoundly to humble herself at his feet, to expect all from his help & assistance, & to combat & fight with courage; to reanimate herself from time to time in the service of God, making stronger resolutions of persevering in it, to be never tired with the length of the temptation; to

addresses herself often to the most blessed Virgin, & to the inhabitants of the celestial Jerusalem, to implore their mediation with almighty God; but above all to be exact & faithfull in small things, in order to merit thereby greater graces, by which she may more surely triumph over the enemies of her salvation.

CCXXIV.

The Author of the Imitation of **JESUS-CHRIST** (B. I. C. 13.) has in one Chapter, all that concerns the conduct that is to be observed, in time of temptation. A Religious that finds herself in this state of humiliation & trial, will meet with admirable instructions, & very proper to strengthen her in her pains, but above all let her take notice of & give attention to these words. "By degrees
 „ & by patience, says the Author] with
 „ longanimity, thou shalt by Gods grace bet-
 „ ter overcome them, [temptations] than
 „ by harshness & thine own importunity. „
 And again these other. "We must not there-
 „ fore despair when we are tempted, but
 „ pray to God with so much the more fer-
 „ vour, that he may vouchsafe to help us in
 „ all tribulations, who no doubt, according
 „ to the saying of St. Paul (1. Cor. 10. v. 13.)
 „ *Will make such issue with the temptation, that*
 „ *we may be able to sustain it.* „ These beautiful words of this great Master of a spiritual life, ought to serve as an instruction to pusillanimous souls, who let themselves be so easily cast down by temptation, as to be said to have lost all confidence in God; who abandon themselves to vexation, to melan-

440 THE PERFECT

choly, to a desponding fear; & who conceive so bad & peevish a humour, as to become insupportable to themselves, & very often even to others. This is not the way to get rid of temptation, it is rather seconding the malice of the devil; for altho' we truly renounce to the evil he suggests, he always thinks to have gained a great deal over a soul, in making her yield to chagrin, impatience & faint heartedness, which are real faults, & always attended with bad consequences.

CCXXV.

All are not equally tempted; but as the pious Author we so often quote, says. (Ib.n.5.)
 „ Some suffer greater temptations in the
 „ beginning of their conversion, some in
 „ the end; and some there are that are
 „ much troubled in a manner all their life.
 „ Some are but lightly tempted, according
 „ to the wisdom & equity of the ordinance
 „ of God. „ To which we may add some
 are grievously so, according to the orders of
 this same wisdom. God is not here to be
 accused of injustice; for his designs in the
 temptations, he permits the most pious souls
 to be attacked with, even for a long term
 of years, are not only to be adored; but we
 ought also to acknowledge a particular mercy
 towards those souls, which he purifies by these
 trials, preserves them in humility, & hinders
 pride & self-love robbing them of the merit
 of their works, making them triumph by his
 grace, & rendring them worthy of his most
 signal favours. “ No Saint, says again the
 Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST,

RELIGIOUS. 441

[B. 2. c. 9. n. 7.] “ was ever so highly rapt
 „ & illuminated as not to be tempted at first
 „ or at last : for he is not worthy of the
 „ high contemplation of God , who has not
 „ for God’s sake , been exercised with some
 „ tribulation. For temptation going before
 „ is usually a sign of ensuing consolation. „

CCXXVI.

Penetrate thoroughly into the sense of these words of the pious Author, you who groan under the temptations you suffer ; you who are grieved & bitterly weep to be always exposed to the malicious darts of the spirit of darkness, who sometimes so besieges you and pursues you, even in prayer, in sacred places, in meditation, in holy Communion. Comfort yourself by the example of **JESUS-CHRIST**, who permitted the devil to tempt him ; comfort yourself by the example of the Saints, “ who all passed thro’ many tribulations & temptations, & who, as the „ Author of the Imitation of **JESUS-CHRIST** „ says, (B. 1. c. 13. n. 2.) profited by them. „ Comfort yourself, since temptation, far from turning to the ruin of your soul, will most usefully serve to its advancement ; comfort yourself, because if you know how to resist it courageously, & bear it with an humble patience ; it will be as serviceable to you to make you advance in perfection, as it would be prejudicial, had you the misfortune to consent to it. There are indeed temptations so horrible, & which are sometimes so strong, that we seem to walk on the brink of a precipice & only one step from falling in ; there is nothing so terrible, nothing so ter-

442 THE PERFECT

rifying to a soul that has the fear of God. But trust then in the Lord, hope in him more than ever you did; cry unto him with a lively faith; he will come to your help, & will draw you out of the danger, to load you with consolations. Should he deffer doing it, so that he supports you & hinders you from falling, be content. Expect with an humble submission & patience. He knows the moment in which to deliver you; & this moment will happen, when you think on it the least.

CCXXVII.

The fear of yielding to temptation is good, it obliges the soul to have recourse to God; it keeps her in a continual watchfulness over herself; it preserves her in humility & fidelity. But if this fear does not produce these effects in the soul, if it is carried to a diffidence & excessive fright, then it is a vicious extreme & to be guarded against. In time of temptation we ought therefore to avoid the two extremities, that of confidence in ourselves or of presumption, & that of a terror & fright that troubles & disheartens us. True fear walks in the middle with confidence, is reasonably diffident, not of the help & assistance of God, in which it hopes & trusts; but of her own strength & sufficiency; & this keeps the soul humble, & renders her more deserving of the assistance of God.

CCXXVIII.

It commonly happens that those who resolve from their heart to give themselves to God, find in the beginning great consola-

tions, & have such a facility in practising what is good, that it costs them nothing; it would on the contrary be painful to them to have other sentiments & dispositions. Their grief for their past faults is very sharp & sensible; they embrace with ardour the exercises of penance; the vanities of the world have no influence on them; they only have a relish for practices of piety; they have scarce any temptation to fight; all that is virtuous is delightful to them, sweet, easy & comfortable. They are children whom God nourishes with milk & honey; but they are yet children in a spiritual life. After this time of consolation, comes that of trial; which augments insensibly & by degrees, & sometimes to such a pitch that may be called extreme, by the excess of pains, both interior & exterior, they are afflicted with; all nevertheless are not so greatly tormented; but it seems the more God exercises his holy rigour upon them, the greater are his designs of mercy & perfection in their regard; & then they may be look'd upon, not as children, but as strong grown persons, capable of generously carrying the yoke of the Lord, & nourished by this divine Master with a more solid food. These perceiving themselves so much changed, are astonished & often frightened, thinking they are fallen from virtue, & have deserved to be abandon'd by almighty God for their infidelities; which throws them into so great a desolation, that they are tempted to abandon all; a new subject of pain still more crucifying. This state begins by a diminishing of the sensible relish of devo-

444 THE PERFECT

tion, & a difficulty of practising good, that makes them fear they are remiss. Temptations afterwards rush in, & the passions, which seem'd a-sleep under the sweets of their first state, being roused, return with greater violence than ever, as if they had gathered new strength. Add dark clouds in the mind, dryness & aridities in the heart, horrible thoughts against faith, against virtues the most amiable & most delicate; interior sentiments of rebellion & of blasphemy against God & of despair, to which they feel themselves inclined, & of which the very thought strangely frightens a timorous conscience; a thousand doubts, that seem well grounded, strike them with a dread, sometimes of their being an object of horreur in the sight of God; sometimes of his having abandon'd them; sometimes of their having consented to all the temptations & illusions, they interiorly feel within themselves. It is hard to make them understand that their state is nothing contrary to God; that the temptations they suffer are without consent on their side; that the privations that afflict them are only trials; that the revolts they feel in themselves are in spite & maugre their own will; that far from being fallen from virtue, they make a great progress in it without perceiving it; that their first state of consolation is not an imaginary one, a chimera, as in their present condition it appears sometimes to have been; that that could not always last, & that this is necessary for them to make them advance & strengthen them in good; that in short, far from having

lost

lost the grace of God, they are more agreeable to him. It is, I say, very hard to make them comprehend this, for their pains would then cease, or would be very much diminished. But God, who keeps them under the rod of his merciful severity, & who designs thereby to dispose them for the great graces he prepares for them, & for the rich crowns he reserves for them in heaven, does not sometimes permit the counsels of men to enter into their mind, & make an impression capable of mitigating their crucifying pains. However we conjure these souls not to be disheartened, to submit themselves with docility & humility to the advice of their spiritual Father, whom we suppose to be an understanding person & one of experience; to be exact in all their exercises, as much as their situation will permit; never to leave off their meditation & communions, precisely on account of their pains; humbly to abandon themselves to almighty God as their father, howsoever severe & unmerciful he may appear; to profit of the least remissness they are guilty of, to renew with greater fervour their resolution of being almighty God's, without division; to conform themselves to his divine will, never to ask with an uneasy eagerness that he would change their state, but only under condition, in as much as it is agreeable to him; & in short, never to cease hoping, that one day he will deliver them & shew them a chearful countenance.

CCXXIX.

The Religious, who in the beginning of consecrating themselves to God, found great

comforts, & experienced a great ardour for all that belong'd to Religion, & who afterwards feel no more the same sweets & the same eagerness for the exercises of their state; these Religious, I say, ought not to be alarm'd nor disheartened; & still less to be doubtful of their vocation. The same is to be said of those, whose first fervour is changed into an extreme repugnance for their regular duties; who are tempted with a regret for having quitted the world, who are shock'd at a subjection to obedience; who cannot bear the sight, manners & conversation of the other Religious; for in a soul that fears God, all this is nothing but a temptation of the devil, who attempts thereby to render her religious vocation fruitless, & to make her quit it, if she is yet a Novice; or to cast her into despair, should she be engaged in it by her profession. And truly this spirit of malice, crafty to the highest degree in wickedness, who cannot see, without jealousy and rage, a soul entirely devoted to God; that may by the plentiful means she has in Religion, arrive at a very high perfection; forgets nothing to divert her from it, & to discourage her if he can. But this Religious, thus attacked by the temptation, far from listening to it, or taking any resolution contrary to the grace of her vocation; ought frequently to beg of God, that he would vouchsafe to confirm her in it, more & more; she ought to attach herself more than ever to fulfill all the duties of it, & above all to apply herself to prayer; to take care not to seek from without any amusements to divert

her from her pains ; but to seek her consolation at the feet of God & from a knowing Director , to whom she entirely unfolds the secrets of her heart , & discloses whatever passes in her mind. By this means, she will find strength against the temptation , a wholesome advice to conduct herself in it , & peace will insensibly be restored to her ; because the Lord will not permit *the just to be forsaken & always in trouble.* [Ps. 36.] We say this to all Religious in general , but we address it more particularly to the Novices ; for the time of the Noviceship is to many a time of temptation ; wherefore we cannot too much recommend to them not to keep their pains secret , which would only be a dangerous addition to their temptation , but to have recourse to their Mistress or their Director , who will comfort & help them to come off victorious in the combat. As to the Mistresses , let them not take ill our recommending two essential points to them. The first is , always to be ready to receive their Novices , to hear them favourably , to encourage them in their timorousness , to be never tired with their frequent recourse , should it be even to importunity & indiscretion ; since they are only in the office , for the consolation & instruction of their young scholars. The second is , never to speak , make known , or give to understand what their Novices have confided to them of their interior , that they may have recourse to them with greater liberty & confidence.

We do not intend, in what we have said, to confound these pious souls whom God tries by temptations, privations, and other interior pains, with those who only suffer them on account of their own tepidity & remissness, & whose minds are continually dissipated; whose hearts are full of ties & often of disorderly affections; whose senses, open to whatever occurs, give a free entrance to all sorts of temptations, & put extraordinary obstacles to the designs of God, in always resisting his inspirations, habitually failing in their rule, entirely neglecting the care of their perfection, & condescending to all that their passions do or can suggest. If these persons dare complain of being often tempted, of having no consolation in the service of God, of feeling all the weight & load of a Religious life, without mitigation; so that it becomes insupportable to them, whilst the faithfull ones carry it with joy & pleasure; if they dare, I say, complain of these things; let them attribute it to themselves, since it is their own fault, if they suffer. In vain will they beg their temptations may have an end, & to taste the advantages of their state; their answer will always be: live conformably to your vocation; be a Religious, & not a Worldling; exact in your duties, instead of neglecting them as you do; then either the temptation will cease, or you will triumph over it with advantage. Almighty God will make you sensible of his sweetness, or should he deprive you of it, he will strengthen you in this state of pri-

RELIGIOUS. 449

vation, & the time will come, when after having sown in tears, you shall reap in joy. (Ps. 125. v. 5.)

CCXXXI.

Some temptations are sooner overcome by flying than by fighting, as I may say, hand to hand with the enemy. Such are those that attack holy modesty, I dont only say we must avoid all exterior occasions, which is easily supposed; but as soon as any bad thoughts present themselves to the mind, you must turn your mind from them, as from an object of horror, & turn it to God; as a child, frighten'd at a dog that pursues him, runs to fling himself in his Mother's arms. The most secure is thus to divert yourself from them; for otherwise the more you would dispute, the more it often happens the imagination is heated, & the odious thoughts make a deeper impression on it. It is of the utmost importance to do this at the very beginning of the temptation; because the least one dallies with it, the devil insinuates himself, gradually enters the mind, passes to the heart & more easily gains it. It is not advisable that timorous people, who by the divine grace would not for the world consent to any offence of almighty God; it is not, I say, advisable, they should after any temptation, particularly if it happens often to them, examine immediately how they behaved in it; for the devil will turn it to his advantage, & renew the temptation more fiercely than before.

CCXXXII.

How much I pity & compassionate you, if

you are attack'd with temptations against faith. In other temptations, the verities of faith serve us as a means to resist them with courage, but in these we know not which way to turn; because t^hell seems a fiction, Heaven a chimera, Religion a fable, Hope finds no support. Do not dispute with this reasoning devil; do not enter with him into an examen of our holy mysteries; but turn yourself towards God, & say to him with an unshaken constancy, as the father of the family said in the Gospel, [Mark 9. v. 23.] *I do believe Lord, help thou my unbelief.* " Some, says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 4. c. 18. n. 3.) " are grievously ,, tempted about faith & the Sacrament. ,, (& the same may be said of the other articles of our belief) " But this is not to be ,, imputed to them, but rather to the enemy. ,, Be not thou anxious, stand not to dispute ,, with thy thoughts, nor to answer the ,, doubts which the devil suggests; but be- ,, lieve the words of God, believe his Saints ,, & Prophets, & the wicked enemy will fly ,, from thee. ,, We must here add, that the fear a timorous person has of having failed in faith, is a p^rec^o. she has not; for tho', through the violence of the temptation, it seems to her that she has lost this precious virtue; it is less her will that has any part in it, than the confusion which the temptation breeds in her mind. And however little any one should attack her about her faith, she would immediately maintain it with courage & steadfastness, & would thereby shew her true sentiments.

Another temptation, very delicate & very troublesome to a good Religious, is, to feel an aversion or natural antipathy against any one of her Sisters. If this aversion is involuntary, it will give her a great deal to suffer; because finding herself frequently in the occasion of seeing, talking & treating with this Sister; she will be obliged to combat her reluctancy, to use violence against herself, to calm her mind, to allay the motions of her heart, & to let nothing escape in words or behaviour, that can shew an indisposition towards her. And if this aversion is voluntary, I mean, if she deliberately entertains it in her heart; how many faults will she not commit every day against charity? And of how many interior & exterior murmurings, of how many thoughts of bitterness and rancour, of how many impatiences & other like sins, will she not be guilty? I speak to you, who are afraid of offending almighty God, & to whom the natural aversion you have for your Sister, is rather an occasion of pain than an affection of your heart; whatever resolution you have taken not to consent to it, rely not however too much upon it; but be extremely vigilant & on your guard, whenever the occasion offers of thinking, speaking, or doing any thing in regard of that Sister. First never willfully entertain in your mind any thoughts of what may displease you in her. Secondly, should you hear her speak of out of the way, do not interfere in the discourse, or always excuse her, without

adding any *Buts* or restrictions. Thirdly, never speak to her but with meekness & goodness, shun not meeting her, nor refuse to do her any service, or to be in any office with her. Fourthly, often pray for her, humble yourself in the sight of God, conceive a worse opinion of yourself than of her; & own in his presence you are nothing but a sinner, & she most virtuous; that you are full of faults & defects, & that nothing but your pride hinders you from seeing her virtues & perfection.

CCXXXIV.

Some are so taken up with their faults or their pains, that they cannot apply or think of any thing else; they perpetually torment themselves with them, they are always ruminating, talking, grieving, vexing, troubling themselves about them. It is a circle out of which they find no passage. There is without doubt a great deal of illusion in this conduct; & as self-love makes many avoid knowing themselves, so does it nourish these in the reflections they continually make on themselves. But what self-love, say you, can there be in tormenting ones self, as they do, with one's faults, & entertaining ones self with ones pains? This self-love consists in being desirous to be without faults, & in desiring it with a bitter anxiety & uneasiness. It is not by continually thinking & vexing themselves, they will remedy it; it must be by prayer, by patience, & by a serious application to correct themselves. Some are inclined to dissipate themselves, to attach themselves to every object that occurs, to

forget & neglect the care of their interior, to whom with reason we say, retire into yourselves, & study to mind & know yourselves thoroughly; but to those, of whom we speak, we rather say, go out of yourselves, do not occupy your thoughts with yourselves, but raise them to God, cast yourselves into his arms, & abandon yourselves to him. What do these souls gain by making so many reflexions on themselves, with so great an uneasiness? Was their chagrin, on account of the faults they reproach themselves with, ever a means to correct them? On the contrary, it is to them a constant occasion of impatience, of sadness, of discouragement, & of peevishness; & after having spent years in this state, they may still reproach themselves with not having mended one single fault, not having acquired one single virtue, with having apply'd themselves to the exercises of piety with tepidity & negligence, with having suffered a great deal in their minds & all in vain, & with having tried the patience of their Directors, & perhaps even often excited their impatience.

CCXXXV.

Scrupulosity is a spiritual disease, which one ought to endeavour to cure. Far from being a help to the practice of solid piety, it is an obstacle to it; and leads us to so great a discouragement, that wearied & vexed to suffer so much from an erroneous conscience, we embrace the opposite extreme, we throw off the care of our souls, & give into relaxation & remissness. All scrupulous persons are not so, out of the same principle,

454 THE PERFECT

nor to the same degree, nor on the same subject; some are so by nature, others by self-love, or thro' obstinacy in their own opinion; others thro' ignorance, others thro' the artifice of the devil; & it is very rare that God makes use of scrupulosity as a means to purify souls. Besides, some are industrious in tormenting themselves, by their continual reflections on their thoughts, on all that passes in their minds, on an infinity of moral circumstances they meet with in their sentiments & in all they do; that it is hard to conceive how their head can furnish them with so many singular, odd, extraordinary ideas. Some in short are scrupulous about their confessions, others about saying the office or other prayers; some find matter of mortal sin every where, & can scarce move or do any thing, without fear of sinning grievously themselves, or of giving occasion to others of doing so. Whoever would follow all the imaginations of scrupulous people, will never find an end.

CCXXXVI.

It is a fault of scrupulous persons to consult often, & always return to their own Judgment; to grant they ought to renounce to their own light, & never to do it, to promise a hundred times they will submit, & only do it for an instant. Sometimes they think they are not scrupulous, & will not be taken for such; whilst a Confessor, even of little experience, cannot but know them. Sometimes they think never to have said enough to explain themselves sufficiently, whilst they have said twice as much as necessary; &

the more they would make themselves understood, the less are they satisfied; whatever rule they are ordered to follow in occasions, they always find some new circumstance, that hinders them from complying with it, & so they must consult a new, discompose themselves, & try the patience of their Director. In short their conscience is a chaos, & were we to judge of God by their disposition, he would no longer be that Sovereign Being, infinitely good & merciful, who wills the salvation of all mankind; but an inflexible Judge, an unmerciful exactor, who has decreed their ruin, & therefore lays snares at every step to catch them. The effects that follow such dispositions are deplorable; never to taste the sweets of virtue; to have the mind always prepossessed & full of troublesome ideas, unsufferable ones; to be devoured by their remorse, & believe themselves loaded with mortal sin & an object of horror in the eyes of God; to be often in such strange perplexities, that whatever they do, it seems impossible to avoid sin; to torment themselves for every thing, & to torment others, either by their bad humour, occasioned by the pain they suffer, or because they render themselves incapable of doing any thing; but above all to torment their Confessors, whose scourge they truly are. This is what the scrupulous people do; but this portrait, in which they may know themselves either in the whole, or in part, ought certainly to induce them to use all their efforts, to get out of such a dismal, uncomfortable situation.

456 THE PERFECT
CCXXXVII.

Scrupulous persons, if they have a mind to be cured, have no other means to take, than that of an humble, simple, blind obedience to him, who is the spiritual father & Director of their souls. All that the Masters of a spiritual life have said on this subject, is reduced to the necessity they are under of being obedient. They are permitted to explicate themselves with their Director once, twice, thrice; but that over, they must listen no more to their thoughts; nor to the cries of their uneasy pusillanimous conscience; they must precisely abide by obedience, must depend on obedience, must think, judge, decide nothing but by obedience. If they constantly make use of this means, & courageously resist their own mind, they will certainly be cured, & will at length have the consolation of serving God in peace, & tasting the sweets & charms of piety. Whereas on the contrary, the more they are obstinate in following their own ideas, the more their pains will augment & their torment will last longer.

CCXXXVIII.

Whosoever you are in Religion, that labour under interior pains, take care not to seek a remedy for them in relaxation & dissipation; seek it rather in the advice of a pious & knowing Director, but above all, seek it at the feet of JESUS-CHRIST by prayer, principally in the most August Sacrament of the altar, by a frequent participation of this bread of strength, of this food of life. Alas! what ought not to be the devotion of a Religious

RELIGIOUS. 457

Religious towards this divine Sacrament ! the very thought that it contains her sacred Spouse ought to inspire her with courage , with ardour , & with an extraordinary joy ; it ought to be enough for her , that he is strong & lively , to hearten , strengthen & make her bid defiance to hell itself ; to render her crosses light , & change all the bitters of this life into sweetness. I have no necessity , she ought to say , to ascend to Heaven ; there to find him that can protect me against all the enemies of my soul , & whom alone I ought to love above all ; he has vouchsafed to fix his dwelling with me ; there I find him as often as I desire ; he is there for me , there he expects me every moment ; he resides there for the love of me ; 'tis his love that ties him there with the chains of his infinite bounty. His will is , that I should go & entertain him there ; relate to him all that concerns me ; speak to him of my wants & my pains , make him my confident , & open to him the secrets of my heart , and place in him all my hopes & confidence. O how comfortable are these reflections to a Religious , whose faith is lively & animated ! How powerfully may they help her , to bear with courage & patience the tribulations & miseries of this exile ! An interior Religious , in consequence of these pious sentiments , finds no greater ease in her pains , than by exposing them to her divine Spouse , at the foot of his Tabernacle. She thence draws light in her doubts , & counsel in her perplexities ; necessary strength in tribulations & temptations , cou-

458 THE PERFECT

rage in difficult occasions, sentiments of fervour in dryness; grace to correct herself & advance in virtue, an entire & full help & remedy in all her necessities. The oftener she presents herself with respect, with humility, with devotion, the more she will be favoured. This Sacrament contains the treasure of all graces, but it is an humble & sincere piety only that finds & obtains them.

CCXXXIX.

You ought never to pass before the choir, without raising your mind & affections to the most blessed Sacrament. If you go in, let it always be with a profound respect, & a tender affectionate devotion. Gaze not about, but keeping your eyes modestly cast down, your body strait, your mind struck with the presence of JESUS-CHRIST, make your inclination or genuflexion in such a respectful manner, that it may appear that the exterior homage you render to JESUS-CHRIST, flows, as it were, from it's source, & that you are no less penetrated interiorly with devotion & love for him, than you shew yourself to be by your exterior action. It is generally known, by the genuflexion a Religious makes before the blessed Sacrament, whether she is recollected & interior; she that is not, only performs this duty negligently, in haste, & without any gravity.

CCXL.

A Religious ought to have a great zeal & devotion for whatever regards or relates to the most blessed Sacrament. The decoration & dressing of the altars, the neatness of the ornaments deserve all her attention. O how

happy & how highly favoured ought those to esteem themselves, who are in this employ ! With what a spirit of Religion ought they to touch, & take care of every thing that regards the holy Temple, & principally of every thing that is used in our sacred & tremendous Mysteries ! To acquit themselves of it with a suitable piety & devotion ; they ought to propose to themselves as a model, that which the blessed Virgin had in the care she took of the linnen, that served the Infant JESUS.

CCXLI.

A Religious silence ought to be kept in the Sacristy, not only not to disturb the Priest, who is preparing himself for Mass, or making his thanksgiving ; but likewise on account of the blessed Sacraments being so nigh. The Sacristans for this ought to observe & take care not to talk with a loud voice, in the inward Sacristy ; & above all they ought to have no vain idle discourse with their Confessor or Chaplain ; but content themselves with giving out the necessary ornaments. This maxim is of greater importance, than at first it appears : such useless conversations, & which are daily renew'd between the Religious & their Chaplain, are often the occasion of familiarities & ties, very prejudicial to their soul.

CCXLII.

When a Religious is truly interior, all her desires carry her towards JESUS-CHRIST ; whom she will see without veil, & face to face in Heaven ; but in the mean time, she esteems herself happy beyond all expression,

460 THE PERFECT

to possess him really, under the veils of bread & wine, in the most August Sacrament of the altar. How often in a day does she not sigh after the happiness of receiving him? How often does she not go to pay him her most profound homages & adorations, & breath forth the burning desires of her heart. Ah! when the love of JESUS-CHRIST has taken entirely possession of the heart of a Religious; he incessantly draws it to his sacred Tabernacle; she would fain be constantly there, & can't go away without using violence to herself. Profit of the leisure you have on sundays & holidays, to be there as long as you can; you cannot be better than in the company of JESUS-CHRIST; & if your occupations on others days do not permit you to be there for a time, often turn your mind & desires thither; he will hear & accept of them, in whatever corner of the Monastery you are, & will perhaps make you taste the unction of his love as sensibly, as if prostrated at the foot of the altar, you adored him there.

CCXLIII.

I would not have you slow in going to JESUS-CHRIST in holy Communion, I would have you run to him. Did you sincerely love this all amiable Spouse of your heart, why should you not hasten to receive him? Bring with you a profound humility, a tender confidence, a holy fear, & a lively gratitude. Alas! had we a true lively faith, what transports of joy & love should we not feel within our breasts? But our faith is weak & is not truly animated; hence we are so little

touched with a fervour, that ought to make our very hearts melt with sentiments of tenderness & recognizance. Are you not in these happy dispositions, humble yourself & desire to have them; say with the devout & faithful soul, in the book of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST: (B. 4. c. 14. n. 2.) "Be thou merciful to me, O good JESUS, sweet & gracious Lord, & grant me, thy poor beggar, to feel, sometimes at least, in the sacred Communion, some little of the cordial affection of thy love; that my faith may be more strengthened, my Hope in thy goodness increased, & that my charity being once perfectly enkindled, & having tasted the *Manna* of Heaven, may never decay."

CCXLIV.

Endeavour to approach to holy Communion with the same sentiments, as if you saw with your corporal eyes, our Lord JESUS-CHRIST present before you. Was JESUS-CHRIST to appear to you in your cell; what raptures would you be in? What would be your astonishment? With what respect would you adore him? With what fervour would you present to him the wants & necessities of your soul? With what joy and delight would you behold & contemplate him? But is not faith more sure than the testimony of our senses? And if you would be so fervent and burning, in seeing him with your corporal eyes; why should you be so tepid & cold in seeing him with the eyes of faith, under the eucharistical species? The very moment you receive him, you must

462 THE PERFECT

reunite all the powers of your soul to contemplate & adore him, in the profoundest manner you are capable of. Accompany him in mind with all respect, when he descends into your stomach, as if with your hands you placed him in your heart, as in a Tabernacle. Retire afterwards from the holy Table to recollect yourself entirely; endeavour to forget every thing, & would to God you could forget yourself, to occupy your thoughts with nothing but the infinite treasure you possess. Husband most carefully the little time JESUS-CHRIST is within you; employ it in keeping yourself united to him, or in adoring him in a Religious silence. Calmly follow the affections he inspires you with, & draw from his sacred heart all you possibly can of unction, of love, & of grace.

CCXLV.

Watch carefully over yourself, when you are to go to Communion; & if you have the happiness of going often, let this signal favour oblige you to keep yourself in a greater purity of heart; for as JESUS-CHRIST says in the book of the Imitation, (B. 4. c. 12. n. 1.) " I am the lover of purity & „ the giver of all holiness. I seek a pure heart, „ and there is the place of my rest. „ This purity of heart chiefly consists in emptying it of all terrene affections, in banishing from the mind the tumult of the world; in cutting off all vain desires; in continually purifying & correcting ourselves of our faults, and in keeping ourselves in retirement & recollection. O how much a Religious would profit by her Communions, did she tho-

roughly reduce this to practice? JESUS-CHRIST would establish his reign in her heart, in proportion to it's being empty of the spirit of the world, & finding it purged of the old leaven, he would replenish & fill it with his divine unction.

CCXLVI.

One Communion must help to keep you in a fit & due disposition for the next, & your life must pass in acts of thanksgiving for the Communion you have made, & in preparation for that you are to make. This practice is most excellent & very proper, to maintain you in a holy vigilance & in the fervour of piety. Besides it is so much the more easy, as it is more adapted to the capacity of Religious, who are almost all accustomed to communicate at least sundays & thursdays; so on the one side, they may propose to themselves to be exact in the practice of all those acts of virtue, which providence furnishes them an occasion of, making them serve to thank our Lord JESUS-CHRIST for the happiness they had of receiving him in their sundays Communion; & on the other side, they ought to watch over themselves, not to commit any voluntary faults, & to keep themselves in recollection, to be the better disposed for Communion on thursday, & so successively from one Communion to another. Is any thing else necessary & wanting to sanctify a Religious?

CCXLVII.

A Religious must not without reason & out of her own Judgment, abstain from holy Communion, nor think it a trivial thing to

464 THE PERFECT

be deprived of it. Did you truly love our Lord JESUS-CHRIST, could you deprive yourself of a Sacrament in which you possess him all entire? The more the Saints were inflamed with love, the more did they sigh with fervour after this bread of life; & their greatest consolation, in this place of banishment, was to partake of it often. Do it then, at least on the days appointed by the rule, & do it even oftener, if they think fit to permit you, far from dispensing with yourself on the days prescribed by the rule.

CCXLVIII.

When it is ordered in the rule, that the Religious shall go to Communion on certain days, for example on sundays, thursdays & holydays: it is not mean't they may not be permitted to go oftner, according as they desire & are disposed for it; since the Church desires & wishes that all the faithful should so live, as to be in a state of communicating every day, & with much greater reason the Spouses of JESUS-CHRIST. And therefore the rule ought not to be cited as a pretext for not going oftner to Communion than it ordains; but all that can be infer'd from it is, that one ought not to go more seldom than it orders & prescribes.

CCXLIX.

The Superiors ought not slightly, & thro' capriciousness or scruple, to refuse leave to their Religious of making the extraordinary Communions they ask for; they ought rather to praise the Lord to see them so eager for this food of salvation, & of eternal life; & unless they are certain they abuse it, they

RELIGIOUS. 465

ought to condescend to their pious desires, with so much meekness & charity, as to inspire them with a confidence of often reiterating the same demand.

CCL.

One of the greatest consolations a Superior ought to think she can have, is, to see all her Religious assembled together at the Table of the Lord, on the days appointed by the rule. It is truly an object most edifying to see an entire Community partaking, with piety & devotion, of our holy Mysteries. Ah ! did the Religious unanimously strive by a holy emulation, to render themselves worthy of frequent Communion ; might not their Monastery be called a terrestrial paradise, where the celestial Spouse is surrounded with his holy Spouses, that follow him wherever he goes, & continually wait upon him ? But when in a Monastery, only one part, & often the least of the Community, approaches to the holy Table, on the days appointed for so sacred an action ; how little fervour does it shew for this divine Sacrament, & how feeble & languishing does their love for our Lord JESUS-CHRIST appear to be !

CCLI.

„ The enemy knowing „ says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, [B. 4. c. 10. n. 1.] “ the very great advantage & „ remedy which is in the holy Communion, „ strives by all means & occasions, as „ much as he is able, to withdraw & hinder faithful & devout persons from it. „ And we may add, he only succeeds too well.

466 THE PERFECT

We exhort the Religious to read, with a particular attention, the Chapter we have just cited; they who are too fearful to approach the holy Table, may therein discover the falsity of the pretexts, the devil makes use of to divert them from it, & may plainly see how dangerous it is for them to second his artifices, by their pusillanimity.

CCLII.

You say you have too many faults, to dare approach often to holy Communion. This reason strikes at first & seems very plausible; but when we examine into it, we find that in some it is nothing but an excess of fear, & in others an indevotion & relaxation. The first ought to follow the advice of a pious & understanding Confessor or Director, & make the lights of their scrupulous consciences bend & yield to his. They ought to consider, that if it is these faults that hinder & stop them, they will never go to Communion, since as long as we live & are in the world, we shall always have faults to correct. As to the others who live in tepidity & sloth, they ought to use all their endeavours to encourage & put themselves in a state of communicating often, as it becomes a person particularly consecrated to JESUS-CHRIST. It is true, it is not reasonable that those who live in remissness & in an affected negligence of their duties, who far from having a mind to correct themselves, take on the contrary a pleasure & delight in their faults, & will remain groveling in them: It is not, I say, agreeable to reason they should be treated in the same manner

as those, who have their perfection at heart. But here is what ordinarily follows from the pretext they alledge of their faults: let it be well taken notice of; what follows is, they cut of their Communion, without remedying the faults that hinder them going often to it. On the contrary, they always become more relax, they grow worse & worse; they absent themselves from Communion, rather out of a disgust to God than out of any respect they have for him, & what excites our very tears, they are glad to communicate seldom, not to be obliged to live so regularly, as going frequently to Communion requires they should. "Alas! ,, cries out the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 4. c. 10. n. 4.) "alas! some tepid & dissolute people are willing to put off their confession, ,, & desire that their Communion should be ,, defer'd, lest they should be obliged thereby to keep a stricter watch over themselves. Ah! how little is their love of ,, God, how weak is their devotion, who ,, so easily put by the sacred Communion. ,,

CCLIII.

This pious Author, just cited, shews elsewhere with great energy, the necessity we have of often having recourse to holy Communion, to correct ourselves of our faults & to hinder us from falling into a state of remissness & relaxation. "It is ,, says he, [B. 4. c. 3. n. 2.] "it is indeed necessary for me (who am so often falling & committing sin, & so quickly grow slack & faint) by frequent prayers & confessions ,, & by the holy Communion of thy body

„ to repair my strength , to cleanse & in-
„ flame my self , lest perhaps by abstaining
„ for a longer time , I fall away from my
„ holy purpose. „ And (c. 4. n. 2.) he says ,
„ For this most high & most excellent Sa-
„ crament is the health of soul & body ,
„ the remedy of all spiritual diseases , by
„ which my vices are cured , my passions
„ are restrained , temptations are overcome
„ or lessened , a greater grace infused , vir-
„ tue receives an increase , faith is confir-
„ med , Hope strengthened , charity inflamed
„ & enlarged. „ These words are so clear
of themselves , that it is not necessary for us
to add our reflexions to make them be un-
derstood. Religious ought to know , that in
depriving themselves of holy Communion ,
they deprive themselves at the same time
of the most efficacious means of correcting
themselves of their faults , & that the more
seldom they approach to JESUS-CHRIST , in
whom alone they can find strength to resist
their temptations & to combat their passions ,
the less they will be able to overcome them.
They must , having by the assistance of di-
vine grace a sincere will to amend them-
selves , & sincerely detesting in themselves
whatever may be displeasing to our Lord
JESUS-CHRIST , but sensible at the same time
how great their own weakness is , they must ,
I say , approach with humility & confidence to
this divine Master , & faithfully profiting of
the grace that flows from his sacred heart , en-
deavour to amend themselves & to grow in vir-
tue , in order always to put themselves in a state
of often frequenting this adorable Sacrament.

I would have you infinitely respect our Lord JESUS-CHRIST in the Holy Sacrament; & we cannot do it enough, since he is God equal to his Father, & deserves our most profound adorations. But if you carry your respect so far, as to withdraw yourself on that account from the holy Table, he will not accept of your homages; because you thereby correspond but very ill to the designs of mercy & of love, he had in the institution of this Sacrament of the Altar. Was he ignorant of our meanness, of our miseries, of our unworthiness? No without doubt; & nevertheless he calls us, he invites us to come to him, he tells us in the Gospel: (Matt. 11. v. 28.) *Come to me all you, that labour & are heavy laden, & I will refresh you.* What can you oppose to words so full of bounty, of tenderness, & of charity? Do your sins frighten you? Let the amorous invitations of JESUS-CHRIST encourage you, & remove your fears. He would not shew himself to you in the splendour of his glory, with which you would be overwhelmed; but he has hid himself under the species & appearances of bread & wine, as if it was to excite in you, an ardent hunger & desire of nourishing yourself with him.

CCLV.

In some cases, it is commendable to abstain thro' respect from holy Communion. „ If sometimes „ says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 4. c. 10. n. 5.) „ a person abstains out of humility, or by „ reason of some lawful impediment; he is „ to be commended for his reverence. „

470 THE PERFECT

But these cases are not frequent, & you would be grossly mistaken, was you to make a law of it. The Saints did not think so; it was out of respect for JESUS-CHRIST, that Saint Peter refused at first, to permit him to wash his feet: but when his adorable Master threatened him he should have no part with him, if he obstinately refused any longer; he offered him not only his feet to wash, but also his hands & his head. Apply this to yourself, you, who out of respect, dare not to approach often to Communion. Give ear to what JESUS-CHRIST says to you (John. 6. v. 54.): *Except you eat the flesh of the son of man, & drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.* Let this threat render & make you as docile as Saint Peter; & present yourself, not only to communicate sometimes, but also frequently.

CCLVI.

O sacred Virgins, thrice happy Spouses of JESUS-CHRIST! May this divine Spouse draw you so strongly, by the sweet odour of his perfumes, as to make you run after him with a most longing eagerness; may his holy love inkindled in your hearts, spur you on without ceasing, & consume you with a burning desire of receiving him! May you sigh day & night after the happy moment, in which he will come & honour you with his presence! may you, when this moment, so much desired, is come; be rapt up & transported out of yourselves, by an excess of holy joy! May you in receiving him, annihilate yourselves & be lost in his divine heart, the inexhaustible source of holy love & charity! May you, in short, make so good a profit of the visit of your

Saviour, as to be transformed into him in such a manner, as to have the same mind & the same heart with him ! O how the Saints sighed after this divine Banquet ! With what ardour did they press themselves to approach to it, & with what fervent devotion did they receive it ! What spiritual riches did they not acquire from it ! What hinders your imitating them, you, whom JESUS-CHRIST calls to his Table, as he did them, & who will, in giving himself to you, enrich you as he enriched them, with his graces & favours.

CCLVII.

The Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST has, in his fourth book, said all that is most instructive & most touching upon holy Communion. We cannot too much recommend to Religious persons the reading it often. They will find there lessons full of celestial wisdom, & of moving sentiments, worthy of the hearts of the greatest Saints. In whatever disposition they find themselves, of temptation or of peace, of pain or of consolation, of dryness or of fervour ; & to what ever degree of prayer or of love they are raised, they will find what is proper for them. The 2. 3. 4. Chapters contain prayers full of unction, to serve by way of preparation ; & the 13. 16. & 17. Chapters are full of the most touching breathings & ejaculations of the heart, to serve as a thanksgiving ; the pious Author, in the other Chapters, exhorts with the most moving unction, to approach often to this divine Sacrament ; to do it with the respect, the humility & the fervour that animated the Saints ; but above all, to devote ourselves without

472 THE PERFECT

reserve, to our Lord JESUS-CHRIST; to unite our hearts to his, & to drink and inebriate ourselves with the sacred love, that is in him as in it's source, & flows from him as from it's fountain.

CCLVIII.

The law of sacred love obliges all mankind. With how much greater reason does it oblige the Spouses of JESUS-CHRIST? Alas! Can it be necessary to recommend it to them, & to propose the motives for it? Let them open their eyes, & see why they are separated from the world. To whom & to what have they solemnly consecrated themselves? All that surrounds them in their Monastery; all they are obliged to practise; all that is in them; all announces to them this law of love. O blindness of a Religious that does not perceive it, or rather that will not attend to it; that has no mind to acquire the love of JESUS-CHRIST; that is tepid, slothful, negligent in his service; that places her affections on creatures; keeps her attachments & lives in dissipation! Ah! How dear will her ingratitude & her infidelity cost her one day!

CCLIX.

When our blessed Saviour sent his Disciples to preach, he said to them: [Matt. 10.] *Carry neither scrip, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor staff.* We may almost say the same to a Religious, who has a mind seriously to enter on the way of holy love. Disengage yourself from all, carry nothing with you that may hinder your going on freely; sacrifice all that may be an incumbrance to you, be it never so precious & dear to you. Give all for all.

Let the possession of holy love suffice you. The more you free yourself from the slavery of the world, the higher you will raise yourself in the celestial region of the love of God.

„ If thy love be pure, simple & well ordered „ Says the Author of the imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 3. c. 27. n. 1.) “ thou shalt „ not be a captive to any thing. Covet not „ that which thou mayst not have : seek not „ to have that which may hinder thee, & „ rob thee of inward liberty. „

CCLX.

Have you a mind to make a progress in holy love? Apply yourself to it, with all the ardour you are capable of; have no other emulation than that of succeeding in it. Pursue, as I may say, pursue, without stopping, this heavenly love; run after it till you overtake it. Let your mind, your heart, let all the powers of your soul be taken up in seeking it, & in preserving it when you have found it. Call after it by your desires, by your sighs, by your groans, by your tears, by the aspirations of your heart. Ah! if you know how to frame & excite in yourself these pious affections, you will soon obtain it, or rather you have already obtained it, & will make it augment & increase more & more in you.

CCLXI.

Once more, are you desirous to succeed in holy love? Behave yourself as if there was no one in the Monastery, but JESUS-CHRIST & yourself. Let him alone be your treasure & your portion; desire only him, & unite together in him, all the vows & all the affections of your heart. Take him for your only friend,

474 THE PERFECT

as thro' his infinite goodness, he desires to be the holy Spouse of your soul. Enter into a sacred commerce with him, a society & union of heart, that may keep you attached, tied, & indissolubly united to him. Carry yourself with him in the Monastery, as the most holy Virgin, & her chaste Spouse Saint Joseph lived with him, in their house at Nazareth. O what a model for you of heavenly conversation! How did these two Seraphims of the earth live in their poor cottage? Always in the presence of JESUS-CHRIST; always taken up with the sight of JESUS-CHRIST; always ravished with the adorable loveliness of JESUS-CHRIST; always inflamed with love for JESUS-CHRIST; always active for the service of JESUS-CHRIST; always inviolably attached to JESUS-CHRIST, & living entirely for JESUS-CHRIST. What were not their transports in contemplating him, their devotion in hearing him, their joy in possessing him? O heavenly life! O anticipated happiness! O conversation all divine!

CCLXII.

Let the recollection & the spirit of retirement of the blessed Virgin & of her holy Spouse, be also a rule for you, if you have a mind to partake of the precious advantages of the love of JESUS-CHRIST. Fly dissipation, & nourish yourself, as one may say, with the food of holy recollection. Permit not your mind easily to expand it self, over all the objects that occur. Whatever is transitory is nothing, & ought not take up your thoughts: avoid also multiplicity of words. Do not, either thro' a natural affection, or thro' a

RELIGIOUS. 475

desire of making yourself known, seek & procure those external employs that fill your mind, & trouble & disturb the tranquillity of your soul. Seek peace, but seek it no where but in the possession of JESUS-CHRIST. Shut yourself up, as much as you can, within your own obligations; let them be your only care & sollicitude. Retire often into yourself, & as the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST says, (B. 1. c. 20. n. 8.) “ Shut the door upon thee, & call to thee JESUS thy beloved. „ Entertain yourself with him openly & freely, & as it were heart to heart, with an amorous confidence, as with the only friend of your soul, & the only one with whom you love to converse. If you disentangle yourself from all, for the sake of this only beloved, he will come into you, he will make you sensible of his presence, he will familiarize himself with you, with a goodness that will ravish you in a holy astonishment; he will communicate his love to you, you will love him & be beloved by him.

CCLXIII.

Love tends to union, & by consequence to Imitation. If therefore you are desirous of being united to our Lord JESUS-CHRIST, by a true love; if you have a mind he should love you & make you feel a relish of his love, study to imitate him. Be like a looking glass, in which he may see his virtues copied & represented, & may contemplate himself with delight & pleasure. Love does not consist in words, but in works & in truth; & these works & this truth is nothing, but an Imitation of the virtues of JESUS-CHRIST. Many

476 THE PERFECT

talk much of the love of JESUS, & run into long discourses & exclamations, on the happiness there is in loving him alone, without nevertheless giving any proof of their love by their works. Equivocal, ambiguous proof! Such a one JESUS-CHRIST is not content with, he who loves truth, since he is truth it self. Speak not so much of his love, but let your care to imitate him in his virtues speak for you, & shew that you love him.

CCLXIV.

The Spouses of men follow & share the fortune of their husbands, & partake with them of their good & bad fortune. Why would you not follow that of your heavenly Spouse, which will always be good & happy, tho' not always, in this life, pleasing to self-love & to our senses? He has a mind to crown you with himself in Heaven; but since he suffered so much on the cross, it is just you should partake of his suffering & be crucified with him. The cross he presents you with is the pledge of his love; receiving it from his hand will be to him the pledge of yours. Resolve then to suffer for JESUS-CHRIST, if you have a mind to shew your love to JESUS-CHRIST. Be not frighten'd; however heavy & painful the cross appears to nature, love will soften & make it light, it will change the bitterness of it into sweetness, & makes a balsam & divine unction flow from the wood of the cross, that will comfort your heart, & recompense you with it's sweets for all it's rigours. This is a Mystery known to a few, & is still less understood. We may say with Saint Augustin: give me one that truly loves, & he will perfectly understand it.

„ Whosoever is not ready to suffer all
„ things, & to stand resigned to the will of
„ his beloved, is not worthy to be called a
„ lover. „ Thus says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 3. c. 5. n. 8.)
& thereby gives us to understand, that a person who would profit in holy love, ought to shew it by her courage to suffer all that her sacred Spouse sends her, that is harsh, painful & bitter. She ought to enter into the merciful views of her well beloved, who has a mind by sufferings to purify her, to disengage her from the world & from herself, & to associate her to him on the cross. A Religious then, who will truly enter into the ways of holy love, ought ambitiously to seek after sufferings, as the means to render herself always more worthy of the love of her celestial Spouse; because they purify her, they adorn and beautify her in his sight, they unite her to him more strictly, & shape her more perfectly to his Image & resemblance.

CCLXVI.

Love does not consist in sweets & sensible consolations; but in a faithfulness & constancy to maintain our ground in time of tribulation. „ A valiant lover, „ says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, [B. 3. c. 6. n. 1.] „ stands his ground in temptations, „ & gives no credit to the crafty persuasions „ of the enemy. As he is pleased with me in „ prosperity, so I displease him not when „ I send adversity. „ The person who grows remiss in tribulation or privation, who yields to impatience or to sloth; who then seeks

her consolation & support in exterior satisfactions & in creatures ; has but a weak & ungenerous love , & there is no appearance of her making any progress in the perfection of charity. As an unshaken faith does not stand in need of the testimony of the senses to believe , & the word of God suffices ; so a constant & generous love needs not the tender sweets of a sensible devotion , but the good will of her heavenly beloved is sufficient. Thus love raises it self even above the gifts of God , to repose in him ; because it seeks nor wills any thing but him. It maintains & keeps it self up in the midst of darkness , of obscurities , of temptations , of desolations. It even encreases & gathers strength ; it becomes more steady & vigorous under all these trials ; like a rush , that nourishes it self & lives in water , where almost all other herbs do perish.

CCLXVII.

„ If thou knowest not to meditate on high
 „ & heavenly things ; rest on the passion of
 „ CHRIST , & willingly dwell in his sacred
 „ wounds , „ says the Author of the Imitation
 of JESUS-CHRIST. (B. 2. c. 1. n. 4.) The Pas-
 sion of our Lord JESUS-CHRIST was the sub-
 ject of the elevated & lofty prayers of the
 most perfect Contemplatives. They saw, in the
 excels of the sufferings of our Saviour , the
 excess of his love & charity for man , & were
 most powerfully excited to acknowledge so
 immense a bounty , by all the sentiments &
 return of love they were capable of. Alas !
 When love made JESUS-CHRIST sacrifice
 himself for us poor creatures , how is it pos-

sible we should be so insensible, as to refuse our love to him, who fell a victim to his love for us? This ravished the Saints in an extatick amazement, this transported them out of themselves, & raised their senses, by the vehement ardour of their charity. O how burning & inflamed was the love of that terrestrial Seraphim, the great Saint Francis of Assisium, in whom JESUS-CHRIST, whose dolorous Passion he amorously & often meditated, vouchsafed to renew his sacred wounds! He rested himself without doubt, according to the thought of the pious Author just quoted, on the Passion of his Saviour, as on a bed prepared for him by his Seraphick love; & he so much loved to dwell in those sacred wounds, that, it may be said, he never come out of them all his life, since he always carried the miraculous marks & prints thereof in his body. If therefore, in imitation of this great Saint, you often consider & meditate on the sacred wounds of our Saviour with devotion, & fly to them, as to the asylum & refuge of your soul; it will happen to you as it did to the Royal Prophet, who said: the fire of the love of God was inkindled in his heart in time of his Meditation. [Pf. 38. v. 4.]

CCLXVIII.

But if the sight of the sacred wounds of our Saviour ought to excite in your soul, the lively sentiments of a tender devotion, & of an amorous compassion; let that, which opens to you the door of his divine heart, be more particularly the object of your love & devotion. Often kiss & embrace, in mind, the other

480 THE PERFECT

wounds, with a profound humility & a lively acknowledgment, since love made them for your salvation; but enter with an affectionate confidence into that of his heart; penetrate into this sacred heart, & let it be to you as a Tabernacle, raised by the infinite charity of your Lord, where you may say to him with Saint Peter: Lord it is good for me to be here; & whence you may never go forth. Where can you be in greater security? Where with greater comfort? Where can you find more peace & quiet? Where can you obtain more graces? Where can you acquire more virtues? Where more vehemently inflame your heart, with the burning ardours of divine love? "Ah! says the Author of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST, (B. 2. c. 1. n. 6.) „ if thou hast once perfectly enter'd into the „ interior of JESUS, & tasted a little of his burning love; thou wouldst then not care for „ thy own convenience or inconvenience. „

CCLXIX.

When divine love has perfectly subdued a heart; it sets up there a chair, from whence it teaches as a Master; & a throne, from whence it pronounces it's oracles & commands as a Sovereign. So admirable are it's instructions, that one is in a rapture to hear them; so amiable it's government, that one willingly prefers it to the empire of the whole world. Happy the Religious, who is brought up in the school of holy love, who is initiated in it's divine Mysteries, who has the happiness to hear it's heavenly lessons, & who possesses it's supernatural wisdom! Happy she, who has voluntarily submitted herself to it's
holy

holy laws, who faithfully executes it's orders, who lives in an entire dependance on it's will, who does not withdraw herself, in any one point, from her authority, who in all things acts thro' it's motion & impression. You, who read this, consult nought but holy love, do nothing but out of holy love. Let this sacred love be your Doctor & your Master. O how far Superior will be the wisdom it communicates to you, to that of the children of the world, & how much, under it's dominion, will your happiness exceed all the joy, the senses can offer here on earth? The doctrine of holy love is an emanation of the infinite wisdom of the father of lights, & the empire & power of this heavenly love is the same with that of JESUS-CHRIST.

CCLXX.

If you are exact & faithful in following the lessons & the divine laws of holy love; you will at length find yourself disengaged from all affection to the things of the earth. You will look upon yourself here no otherwise, than as in a strange country & as out of your sphere; time will appear to you what it is, that is to say, a fleeting shadow, with all that it contains; all your desires will soar up towards an immutable eternity, where you will be united to God for ever; for holy love comes from God, & it raises the soul to God, who dwells in eternity. Listen & give ear to the sighs & longings after the mansions of heavenly glory, which love breaths out in a soul it has disentangled from all vain affections to creatures, & inflamed with it's holy ardours. " O most happy mansion of

482 THE PERFECT RELIGIOUS.

„ the city above ! ” cries out such a soul in the book of the Imitation of JESUS-CHRIST , (B. 3. c. 48. n. 1.) “ O most bright day of „ eternity , which knows no night , but is „ always enlightened by the Sovereign truth ! „ O day always joyful , always secure , & „ never changing it's state for the contrary ! „ O that this day would shine upon us , & all „ these temporal things come to an end..... „ O good JESUS , when shall I stand to behold „ thee ? When shall I contemplate the glory „ of thy Kingdom ? When wilt thou be all „ in all to me ? „ Such are the amorous breathings of a soul , wounded with the darts of divine love. Happy the Religious, in whom such holy dispositions are to be found ; they are truly of the number of those wise & prudent Virgins, who keep the lamp of their heart lighted , & who live in expectation of the celestial Spouse. Let us put an end to this work, with the most beautiful words of the same Author we have cited , & which may serve for the subject of your Meditation for all your life. “ He , says he , (B. 2. c. 7. n. 3.) „ that loves not JESUS , does himself more „ harm , than the whole world & all his „ enemies could do him. „

FINIS

SOLI DEO HONOR AC GLORIA





THE CONTENTS.

PART THE FIRST.

Of Renouncing to the World & to
One's Self.

ART. *How much Religious ought to*

I. *esteem their state.* 1

VIII. *Of three sorts of worlds to which
they ought to renounce.* 3

IX. *Of the world out of the Monastery.* 4

XI. *Of the speak-house & Parlour.* 5

XIX. *Of vanity, not to be taught the
Pensioners.* 8

XXIII. *Of dangers from a too great fa-
miliarity of the young Religious with
great Pensioners.* 10

XXIV. *Of contempt of honours & riches.* 10

XXVI. *Of the interior world in Monas-
teries.* 11

XXXII. *Of not seeking the friendship of
creatures.* 15

XXXIII. *Of particular friendships.* 15

XLII. *Of difference of Monasteries, as to
regular observance.* 21

XLV. *Of the bad choice of subjects. First
cause of relaxation.* 23

XLVII. <i>Of going too often to the Par- lour.</i>	25
XLVIII. <i>Of young Religious & great Pensioners being together.</i>	25
L. <i>Of reading bad books.</i>	27
LI. <i>Of cards.</i>	28
LII. <i>That there are always some good Re- ligious in Monasteries most relaxed.</i>	29
LV. <i>Of riches & poverty of Monasteries. second cause of relaxation.</i>	31
LVI. <i>Of pensions, & use to be made of them.</i>	33
LIX. <i>Of the means to return to God, when one is fallen into remissness.</i>	36
LXI. <i>Of the means of preserving ones self in piety.</i>	39
LXIV. <i>Of vocations that come not from God.</i>	41
LXVI. <i>Of self denial & renunciation.</i>	44
LXIX. <i>In what it consists.</i>	46
LXX. <i>Advice to Novices on this head.</i>	47
LXXII. <i>That peace is only to be found in it.</i>	48
LXXIII. <i>How to work at it.</i>	50
LXXXIV. <i>Of sincere contrition in the Sacrament of penance.</i>	58
LXXXV. <i>Why many are never content with their confessions.</i>	59
LXXXVI. <i>Of the means of repairing bad confessions.</i>	60
XCIII. <i>Of the predominant vice.</i>	65
XCVIII. <i>Of scandalous defects.</i>	69

XCIX. <i>Of occasions of sin.</i>	70
C. <i>Of self-love.</i>	71

PART THE SECOND.

Of the Practice of Virtues.

ART.

I. <i>OF the practice of virtues.</i>	75
V. <i>That a Religious ought to aspire at perfection.</i>	77
XI. <i>What is the perfection she ought to aim at.</i>	82
XIII. <i>Of illusions in devotion.</i>	84
XVI. <i>Perfection does not consist in extraordinary things.</i>	87
XVII. <i>How to distinguish perfect Religious from imperfect ones.</i>	87
XIX. <i>Of exercises of piety, & how to be perform'd.</i>	91
XXVII. <i>Of particular practices of piety & of illusions therein.</i>	95
XXXIII. <i>Of faithfully observing the rule.</i>	99
XXXIX. <i>Of formal contempt of the rule.</i>	103
XLIII. <i>That all is great in the rule.</i>	107
XLIV. <i>That there are some essential points in the rule.</i>	108
XLV. <i>Of entering into the spirit of the rule.</i>	109

XLVI. <i>A Religious exact in her rule, how agreeable to God.</i>	110
XLVII. <i>Of pious customs.</i>	111
XLVIII. <i>What it is to have the spirit of ones rule.</i>	111
L. <i>When one is judged to have it.</i>	114
LI. <i>Of the vows.</i>	114
LV. <i>Of the renovation of vows.</i>	119
LVI. <i>Of the anniversary of one's profes- sion.</i>	119
LVIII. <i>Of Religious poverty.</i>	121
LXII. <i>Of the use of pensions.</i>	124
LXV. <i>Of avarice & desire of riches of the world.</i>	127
LXVII. <i>Of prodigality.</i>	128
LXVIII. <i>Of precious furniture & toys.</i>	129
LXIX. <i>Of the happiness of a Religious truly poor.</i>	130
LXX. <i>Of the poverty of mind.</i>	132
LXXI. <i>Of chastity.</i>	133
LXXVI. <i>Of letters & poetry.</i>	135
LXXIX. <i>Of obedience & way to practise it.</i>	137
C. <i>How Superiors ought to behave.</i>	153
CV. <i>Of receiving corrections.</i>	159
CVI. <i>Advice to Novices.</i>	159
CIX. <i>Of obedience to Ecclesiastical Supe- riors.</i>	163
CX. <i>Of subordination & humility.</i>	164
CXX. <i>Of humiliation, advice to Novices.</i>	175
CXXII. <i>Of patience.</i>	177

CXXVIII.	Of meekness.	182
CXXXVII.	Of not contesting & disputing.	197
CXXXIX.	Of obstinacy & a contradicting humour.	199
CXLI.	Of false zeal.	201
CXLII.	Of bearing with others faults.	203
CXLIII.	Praise of charity.	205
CXLV.	Of divisions & parties.	207
CXLVII.	Of antipathy.	210
CXLVIII.	Of reports & jealousy.	213
CL.	Of detraction.	216
CLIII.	Of not examining others faults, nor of being easily scandalized.	219
CLV.	Of raillery.	220
CLVII.	Of recreations.	221
CLVIII.	Of officious charity.	233
CLX.	Elogium of Hospital & Ursuline Nuns &c.	225

PART THE THIRD.

Of an Interior Life.

ART.	<i>E</i> Xhortation to an interior life.	229
V.	What is an interior life.	233
VIII.	Three things necessary to an interior life.	234
X.	Of the disengagement of the heart.	235
XII.	Of renouncing to creatures.	236

XV. Of idle conversations.	237
XVII. Of not meddling With others business.	238
XVIII. Of indiscreet zeal.	239
XX. Of virtue too exterior & showy.	240
XXI. Of the love of ones cell.	241
XXII. Against an idle life.	241
XXIV. Against a too great hurry of occupations.	242
XXVII. Of a too great eagerness in occupations.	243
XXXI. Of diligence.	246
XXXII. Of purity of intention.	247
XLIV. Of conforming to the will of God.	256
XLIX. How to know the will of God.	260
LIII. Of dispensations.	268
LIV. Of vain joy & grief.	269
LVII. Of not resisting the will of God, nor dissembling it when known.	271
LIX. Of not envying the talents of others nor their particular graces.	273
LXI. Of keeping one's self in a dependence on God.	275
LXIII. Of a too great sollicitude for temporals.	277
LXIV. Of a sollicitude for the future.	278
LXV. Of immoderate fear of not persevering in good.	278
LXVI. Of working at one's perfection with confidence.	280

- LXVII. *Against pusillanimity & excessive fear.* 281
- LXVIII. *Of means to preserve piety.* 282
- LXX. *Of profiting of the least leisure.* 285
- LXXI. *Of feasts & how they ought to be kept in the spirit of the Church.* 286
- LXXIII. *Advice to the Mistresses of Novices on this subject.* 288
- LXXIV. *Of practices of piety.* 290
- LXXVI. *Of retreats.* 292
- LXXVII. *Of fidelity to grace.* 293
- LXXX. *Of following the spirit of JESUS-CHRIST.* 296
- LXXXI. *Of corresponding to good inspirations.* 297
- LXXXIII. *A rule to discern the inspirations that come from God.* 299
- XCII. *Artifices of self-love to frustrate the inspirations of God.* 309
- XCIII. *Of persons not acting sincerely with God.* 310
- XCIV. *What it is to walk in truth & simplicity.* 312
- XCV. *Of the different motions of nature & grace.* 313
- XCVI. *Of mortification.* 315
- C. *Of mortification of the mind.* 317
- CI. *Of mortification of the will.* 318
- CH. *Of mortification of the senses.* 319
- CVI. *How necessary mortification is to practise charity & obedience.* 323

- CVII. *Of an unmortified Religious.* 324
- CIX. *Of the Order to be observed in mortification.* 325
- CXI. *Of the Saints not being favoured with divine consolations without mortification.* 328
- CXII. *Of bearing the austerity of the rule in a spirit of mortification.* 329
- CXIII. *That mortification is to be found in the rules the least austere.* 330
- CXIV. *Of suffering all inconveniencies of life in a spirit of mortification.* 331
- CXV. *Of profiting of the least occasions of mortification.* 332
- CXVI. *Advice to young Religious on this.* 333
- CXVIII. *Advice to Novices.* 336
- CXIX. *Of mortification to be practised in sickness.* 337
- CXX. *Of corporal austerities & their rules.* 338
- CXXIII. *Of false pretexts of an unmortified Religious.* 341
- CXXIV. *Of the fruits of mortification.* 342
- CXXV. *That no one can be a perfect Religious without mortification.* 344
- CXXVIII. *Of a hidden life with JESUS in God.* 349
- CXXXII. *That Religious in their occupations may lead a hidden life.* 352
- CXXXIV. *Of different states of a hidden life.* 255

CXLIII.	Of keeping secret the graces of God.	361
CXLIV.	Of particular confidences & of giving an account to the Superior.	363
CXLIX.	Of not publishing the extraordinary favours of God.	367
CL.	Of outwardly containing one's self in the raptures of the love of God.	368
CLI.	That persons truly interior are given to a hidden life.	368
CLII.	That the active Saints were given to a hidden life.	370
CLIII.	Of silence.	371
CLXI.	Of the presence of God.	379
CLXII.	Of raising the heart to God.	379
CLXIX.	Of recollection & it's effects.	384
CLXXVIII.	Of the spirit of prayer.	396
CLXXXI.	Of the divine Office.	398
CLXXXII.	Advice to lay Sisters.	399
CLXXXIII.	Of divine Office.	400
CLXXXIX.	Of prayers of devotion.	404
CXC.	Of mental prayer.	405
CXCV.	Of the remote preparation.	411
CXCVI.	Advice to Novices.	413
CXCVII.	That a Religious ought always to be ready to go to Meditation.	414
CXCVIII.	Of not desiring extraordinary states of prayer.	414
CXCIX.	Of studying the life & maxims of JESUS-CHRIST.	415
CCI.	Of Evangelical wisdom & self knowledge.	417

CCIII. Of compunction & holy tears.	420
CCVI. Of consolations & dryness.	422
CCVIII. Of contemplation & it's degrees.	424
CCXII. Of crosses.	430
CCXVII. Of sickness.	433
CCXXIII. Of ordinary & extraordinary temptations.	437
CCXXXI. Of temptations against faith & purity.	449
CCXXXIII. Of antipathies.	451
CCXXXIV. Of scruples.	452
CCXXXVIII. Of having recourse to JESUS-CHRIST in our interior pains.	456
CCXXXIX. Of the respect to the blessed Sacrament.	458
CCXLII. Of Communion.	459
CCLVIII. Of the love of God.	472

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Pag.	differ	read	defer
242	fight		fight
298	marvelour		marvelous
302	fel-love		self-love
319	six		fix
319	the		then
319	to be		be
434	if		it

0
2
s.
4
0
3
ry
7
th
9
1
2
to
or
56
ed
58
59
72

—